The Poetics of Mystery

Genre, Representation, and Narrative Ethics in John Fowles's Historical Fiction

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To my mother Charlotte Harms, to the memory of my father Rainer Brax (1930-2002), and to Minna, Matias and Elias

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Helsinki, March, 2003 Klaus Brax

Abbreviations

A	*The Aristos*, John Fowles
BR	The Book of Revelations
BT	*Barchester Towers*, Anthony Trollope
C	*The Collector*, John Fowles
Ch	*Chatterton*, Peter Ackroyd
D	*Dickens*, Peter Ackroyd
DM	*Daniel Martin*, John Fowles
ES	*The Enigma of Stonehenge*, John Fowles
ET	*The Ebony Tower*, John Fowles
FLW	*The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles
FO	'Foreword' to *Ourika*, John Fowles
I	*Ivanhoe*, Sir Walter Scott
JM	*Jack Maggs*, Peter Carey
LW	*Die letzte Welt*, Christoph Ransmayr
M	*A Maggot*, John Fowles
Ms	*The Magus*, John Fowles
NC	*Nights at the Circus*, Angela Carter
NN	*The Nature of Nature*, John Fowles
NUN	'Notes on an Unfinished Novel,' John Fowles
SC	*Sexing the Cherry*, Jeanette Winterson.
T	*The Tree*, John Fowles.
Ts	*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy
VF	*Vanity Fair*, William Macepeace Thackeray
VS	*La Volonté de savoir*, Michel Foucault

For further details, see References

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Poetics of Mystery

> Art is a mystery […].[1]
>
> [T]he inmost characteristic of art–mystery.[2]
>
> [A]rt makes a tabula rasa of the inauthentic ways in which we encounter the entities, and it invites and provokes us to reinterpret the Something in which we are.[3]

The terms *mystery* and *enigma* and their derivatives occur frequently in Fowles's work, fiction and non-fiction alike. For example, *enigma* appears several times in the stories of *The Ebony Tower* (1974). One of the stories is even titled 'The

[1] cummings 1953, 82.

[2] *A*, 145.

[3] Eco 1999, 35.

Enigma,' which certainly indicates that the occurrence of the term in the collection is not just accidental but rather related to broader semantic questions. The following passage from the collection's title story, in which the narrator describes the art of the fictitious Henry Breasley, is especially important, as it advocates mysteriousness as a poetic principle:

> There was a feeling […] of a fully absorbed eclecticism, something that had been evidenced all through his career, but not really come to terms with before Coëtminais; a hint of Nolan, though the subject-matter was far less explicit, more *mysterious* and archetypal…'Celtic' had been a word frequently used, with the recurrence of the forest motif, the *enigmatic* figures and confrontations.[4]

The passage functions as a significant *mise en abyme* pattern, describing not only the nature of Henry Breasley's paintings but also the poetic principle of mysteriousness that the story, the whole collection, and perhaps even all Fowles's fictions seem to observe. It names one of the most important features of his fiction, namely the "enigmatic characters and confrontations." Fowles's fictions repeatedly describe enigmatic happenings or encounters that take place in some natural setting outside society (at least symbolically), and that become unforgettable experiences for their protagonists.

Moreover, the artistic qualities of the art of Henry Breasley as described are such that they conform to the idea about art as the creator of mysteries put forward by Fowles in his collection of aphorisms, *The Aristos* (1964, revised edition 1980):

> For what good science tries to eliminate, good art seeks to provoke – mystery, which is lethal to the one, and vital to the other. […] [S]cience

[4] *ET*, 18 (italics added).

> tries to be true of an event for all time; while art tries to be an event for all time.[5]

According to Fowles, the aim of art is to bring about wonder and amazement, to make reality seem strange and indeterminate, to be an unforgettable encounter for all times. This conception resembles the idea, originally put forward by the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky, that art produces *defamiliarisation* (*ostranenie*),[6] or Bertolt Brecht's view of the importance of art for causing estrangement (*Verfremdungseffekt*). However, Fowles's view differs from Brecht's, because Fowles clearly confronts art with science while Brecht saw that science too, like Galileo's scientific theories, is capable of producing estrangement.[7] Fowles seems to think that the ultimate intention of science and art are different, because science aims at a universal and eternal truth, "tries to be true of an event for all time," while art is more concerned with deconstructing conventional ways of thinking and with recurrently provoking strangeness. This confrontation between science and art finds expression in Fowles's fiction, repeatedly examining as it does a Western scientific and rationalistic world-view and its relationship to other kinds of experience, whether artistic, non-conceptual or existentialist.

Like Fowles's other literary texts, his postmodernist historical fictions aim to create a sense of mystery, ambiguity or indeterminacy. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) mysteriousness characterises the representation of the main figure, Sarah Woodruff, and functions as *primum mobile* for the romantic plot. The question "Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?"[8] seduces not only Charles Smithson, the male protagonist, but also the implied reader. As regards *A Maggot* (1985), it describes the mysterious disappearance of the secretive Mr Bartholomew in eighteenth-century England, and the effort of

[5] *A*, 145–146.

[6] See Shklovsky 1965.

[7] For Brecht's conception of *Verfremdung*, see Suvin 1979, 6-7.

[8] *FLW*, 84.

the attorney Mr Ayscough to solve the case in rational terms. Both novels, moreover, self-consciously emphasise the ambiguities in historical representation and thus subject the politics of representation to a postmodernist examination.

The subject of the present study is these two postmodernist fictions, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*, and their use of various generic conventions in the representation of history. The study, most economically described as genre analysis, makes an effort to define the distinctively postmodernist poetic features of the novels and by that means to examine the place they occupy in literary tradition and contemporary fiction. By concentrating on the two novels, the study aims at a comparatively varied approach to their application of generic conventions. It focuses on the employment of the narrative and generic conventions of the historical novel, romance, detective story, the fantastic, science fiction (henceforth sf) and essay in the historical fictions. However, my specific aim is to describe how the use and abuse of these conventions or modes take part in the creation of the sense of mystery, ambiguity and indeterminacy. In other words, I shall probe into the postmodernist *poetics of mystery* in Fowles's historical fictions.[9] Moreover, the study examines how the chosen narrative and generic decisions thematise mystery and indeterminacy in the novels. Concerning this thematic approach, I shall particularly explore the manifestation of postmodern ethical principles in the novels and their narration. Combining as it does genre theoretical, narratological and ethical approaches, the study reflects the current interest in ethics within the theory of narrative fiction.

Fowles has published six novels up to the present. Of these, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* set their story in the past, the former in 1867

[9] As a generic term, *mystery* refers here to a mode of writing and not to some specific historical genre. Rather than a dominant formulaic principle, mystery appears most often as a subsidiary principle in several genres or subgenres, like adventure stories, romances, melodramas, hard-boiled detective story, the gothic romance, and the crime thriller (Cawelti 1977, 43). This study aims precisely to show that Fowles's historical fictions use the conventions of several different genres in order to create a sense of mystery.

and the latter in 1736.[10] And even if only these two novels of Fowles's oeuvre derive from the tradition of historical novels or historical romances, his other fictions also represent and deal with history more or less in passing or indirectly. Although the present study concentrates on *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*, it is worth mentioning that in *The Magus* (1967) there are a couple of passages that represent historical events. These passages, including scenes both from the First and Second World War, are, however, part of the novel's God-game or masque and have thus a special character as historical representations. In addition, *The Ebony Tower* is characterised by an anachronistic sense of the medieval world, as the short stories of the collection have as their subtexts a number of medieval vernacular quest-stories, Marie de France's *Eliduc*, Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*, and *Tristan and Isolde*.[11] *Daniel Martin* (1977), Fowles's most realistic novel (often considered a *roman à clef*), includes a passage that depicts the Nile as an ageless river, and some other representations of experiences of timelessness.[12]

The examination of the historical representation in the two novels is rooted in the general debates about postmodernist art, literature and architecture. This is the case not least because the theoretical speculations about history have been central in these debates and in the discussion of postmodernism in general.[13] It has been claimed that while modernism tried to break every connection to history thus stressing the idea of novelty, aesthetic unity and innovation, postmodernism once

[10] For a detailed list of Fowles's literary production, see Appendix.

[11] See Brax 1993, passim.

[12] See below Ch. 4.3.

[13] With postmodernism I understand a stylistic period of literature, art and architecture. I agree with Brian McHale that literary postmodernism can be described as a stylistic period, dominated by certain stylistic characteristics, and coming after modernism as a period style (1987, 3-11). Charles Jencks, Douwe Fokkema, David Lodge, Linda Hutcheon, and Margaret A. Rose number among those theorists who also consider postmodernism as a stylistic period of the arts. However, postmodernist art is here also seen as part of postmodern culture in general. In other words, a postmodernist style and more generally the postmodern cultural situation are considered to have several kinds of reciprocity and interdependence.

again embraces artistic tradition and the past.[14] However, postmodernism's relationship to history is not innocent. It favours parody and irony as forms of approach;[15] postmodernist architecture, art and literature explore historical styles and genres and parodically combine them with modern ones thus forming double-coded and eclectic semiotic discourses.[16] (And this feature is mirrored in the above-cited *mise en abyme* pattern in which the art of Henry Breasley is described as having "a feeling […] of a fully absorbed eclecticism.") Postmodernism recognises history as textual and intertextual, existing only through the relics of the past and not as a transparent, objective, unbiased entity.[17] Moreover, postmodernist literature self-consciously estimates the nature of historical knowledge and narration, and rewrites history from current thematic, cultural and ideological positions.

As with several other postmodernist fictions, the representation of history in Fowles's novels is an ethical undertaking. While studying the ethical thematics of Fowles's fiction, I shall break with those notions that eschew postmodernism as an innovative ethical, stylistic and cultural project, for instance, from Fredric Jameson's neo-Marxist view of postmodernism as nostalgic, schizophrenic and part of the capitalist consumer society.[18] For Fowles, creating narratives seems to be an ethical act, "a kind of teaching."[19] I shall approach various themes in Fowles's fiction, like those of freedom and power (or possession), imagination, individuality (or, the few versus the many), nature, sexuality, rationality versus

[14] Jukic 2000, 77.

[15] Cf. e.g. Eco 1992b, 227.

[16] Jencks 1984, 6 and passim and 1986, 14-15.

[17] Hutcheon 1988, 124-140 and passim.

[18] The study also breaks with Lyotard's equation of the eclecticism of present culture and that of the arts (see Lyotard 1984, 76). I believe that the artistic double-codedness, defined by Charles Jencks and applied to literary theory by Linda Hutcheon among others, is still a critical activity and not easily equated with the eclecticism of popular culture.

[19] Newquist 1964, 220. It seems that Fowles regards art as infection, following thus the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Longinus and Tolstoy (see Tompkins 1992, 202-206 and Tolstoy 1975, 121-122).

sensibility, *stasis* versus *kinesis*. My study aims to contribute to the former discussion on the subject especially by revealing the semantic interdependency of the narrative and generic patterns and the meaning of the novels. Moreover, I shall discuss the themes mentioned in relation to the concept of history. Thus this study makes an effort to analyse, for instance, the way the novels represent individuality in historical change, the possibility of freedom in particular historical situations, the historically marginal confronting official politics, or the conflict between rationality and sensibility that took place in Western societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

At the centre of the thematic approach is, however, the examination of *the theme of indeterminacy*.[20] By indeterminacy I mean here a quality of being vague, open, free, undecided, indefinable, hesitant, ambiguous, unpredictable, anti-teleological, mysterious, or halfway between. Thus, indeterminacy is antonymic to a quality of being determined, prearranged, closed, exact, decided, classified, categorised, taxonomic, not free, totalitarian, or teleological. My presupposition is that in Fowles's historical novels indeterminacy is closely associated with the ethical questions of personal relationships and encounters, of historical attitudes towards nature, of freedom and power, or of historical, cultural and social environment and development. I shall make an effort to analyse how the poetics of mystery serves as a purposeful textual strategy by its different constituents such as ambiguous narration, genre parody, mixing of genres, hesitant character portrayal, metafictionality, essayistic commentary and *mise en abyme* patterns.

[20] Theme is one of the *macropropositions* of the *fabula*, the story level of a narrative (Eco 1981, 14). Accordingly, in defining the theme of a text, the reader tries to subordinate the details of a story more or less coherently to some concept or conceptual opposites. Characteristic of a theme is that it is expressed in the text indirectly through repeating images, symbols and events or other textual and generic strategies (cf. Fowler 1987, 248). As Roger Fowler puts it, theme is always the subject of the text even if the subject is not always the theme (ibid.). Like plot, theme is a dynamic principle of reading: plot is read forwards and theme backwards. The principle of reading that emphasises the retrospective activity of the reader has been called *double reading* (Martin 1986, 127).

1.2 Historiographic Metafictions, or "Dialogues with History"? Charting Earlier Studies

Previously *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* have been approached almost exclusively from the point of view of one genre or subgenre only, whether the chosen generic frame has been tragedy,[21] romance,[22] historical parody,[23] historiographic metafiction,[24] or detective fiction.[25] The earlier analyses, creditable in a number of respects, are lacking a more comprehensive and varied approach to the multiplicity of generic conventions operative in Fowles's historical fiction.

The diversity of the generic conventions of Fowles's fiction has not, however, gone completely unrecognised. Indeed, awareness of the richness of the generic codes of Fowles's fiction seems to have grown in the last few decades, even if there has not been much interest in studying them together. Pierre E. Monnin offers a brief analysis of the utilisation of various eighteenth-century generic codes in *A Maggot* in an article published in 1990. Monnin argues that *A Maggot* uses the conventions from the exemplum, the historical novel, the erotic novel, the hagiography, the allegory, and the lay sermon.[26] Moreover, the concentration on a certain generic pattern at least in some recent Fowles studies has not been motivated by the effort to offer a simple reduction to a particular generic frame but rather by the aim to analyse separately and thoroughly only one generic aspect of the novels. For instance, although Bo H. T. Eriksson concentrates on analysing the detective pattern of *A Maggot*, he also refers to Monnin's notion of a multiplicity of the generic conventions in the novels.[27] However, the varied, not

[21] See Evarts 1971 and Acheson 1998.

[22] See Loveday 1985.

[23] See Stephenson 1996.

[24] See Hutcheon 1988.

[25] See Eriksson 1995.

[26] See Monnin 1990.

[27] Eriksson 1995, 196.

to say eclectic, approach of the present study seems reasonable just because the multiplicity of narrative and generic conventions lies at the heart of postmodernist poetics, the poetics that these two novels clearly represent.[28]

There are surprisingly few works and no independent monograph that approach *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* especially as historical fictions. However, Linda Hutcheon's 1980 and 1988 characterisations of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* as historiographic metafictions[29] are already established points of departure for several later studies.

Nevertheless, Hutcheon's approach has been challenged in more recent treatises. For example, William John Stephenson argues that metafictionality is only one of the dominant poetic features of Fowles's novels, the other, and more important being their re-use of literary and other sources.[30] Stephenson deals with Fowles's and Golding's novels as historical parodies. He defines historical parody as "the performative enactment of past discourses in historical fiction."[31] Interestingly, he reveals and studies some allusions, stylistic and poetic loans in Fowles's novels. Even if not overtly stated and theoretically argued, the study is an intertextual approach to Fowles's fiction, a study that is also informed by Michel Foucault's concept of *the archive*. Unfortunately, Stephenson's work lacks more substantial interpretations of the several subtexts of Fowles's novels.

Equally, James Martin Lang claims that the analysis of Fowles's fiction as historiographic metafiction has been based on too simple and reductive assumptions. Lang correctly argues that the apparent differences in representing the past in postmodernist historical fictions have previously been ignored. Instead of emphasising the metafictional characteristics of Fowles's historical fictions, he concentrates on their dialogue with the past drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas

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[28] Chapters dealing with *A Maggot* are loosely based on my Licentiate thesis on the novel as a postmodernist genre hybrid and postmodernist romance (Brax 1996). However, the present study modifies and expands the earlier analyses in several different ways.

[29] See Hutcheon 1980, 57-70 and 1988, 5, 40 and passim. See also Hutcheon 1989.

[30] Ibid., 8-9.

[31] Stephenson 1996, 13.

of dialogism in literature. His main concepts are *sideshadowing* and *backshadowing*, introduced by Bakhtin scholars Gary Saul Morson and Michael André Bernstein.[32] Some of Lang's particular observations about the relation of the representation of history to existentialist philosophy in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* are also informative.[33]

Furthermore, feminist literary critic Pamela Cooper has Hutcheon's analysis as a point of departure but her interpretation stands finally in sharp contrast to it. She claims that Fowles's women are still under the patriarchal power of the narrator even if the novels have aimed at liberating them precisely from that power. Yet, as shall be shown later in this study, her interpretation is ahistorical and neglects the historical proportionality that Fowles's fiction seems to hold up as a narrative and ethical principle.

All in all, the critical comments on Hutcheon's interpretations seem to lay bare the proposition that the relationship of Fowles's novels to history is irreducible to the metafictional or self-reflective features, even if they certainly are one of the poetic dominants of the novels and of postmodernist literature in general. It should be remembered, however, that Hutcheon herself sees postmodernist fiction as paradoxical, both capable of addressing history and of calling into question historical narratives, even if she mainly analyses the latter aspect.[34] Yet the other aspects of Fowles's fiction and their narration, like concrete intertextual relations and the parodic use of several generic conventions in historical representation, require further research. Even if Fowles's fictions seem to show that history is always intertextual and a discursive construct, they also take part in more substantial constructing of history through intertextuality. Through such

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[32] *Sideshadowing* is a literary technique in which "the actual course of a known historical sequence is rendered in dialogue with other unrealised potential courses of historical progression." *Backshadowing* is a form of anachronistic gaze to history that judges "past actors as if they should have known what we can see now from our present perspective." See Lang 1997, 42, 64, 101, and passim.

[33] See Lang 1997.

[34] See below Ch. 3.5.

intertextuality and parody Fowles's novels also comment on the legacy of literary and cultural tradition and of philosophical and ethical values and norms and of their impact on the current cultural scene. In short, they construct history, even if they show a postmodern sensibility in their simultaneous effort to reveal the discursive conditions of this constructing and to challenge its illusory naturalness.

Previous analyses have paid some attention to the theme of indeterminacy in Fowles's fiction, but a more comprehensive study is still lacking.[35] In particular, the relation of indeterminacy to ethics as it appears in Fowles's fiction has not been dealt with sufficiently. In her earlier work, Hutcheon concentrated on the relativist representation of history in Fowles's novels, but her analyses could not have been informed by the more recent conceptions of postmodern narrative ethics. Mahmoud Salami already claims that indeterminacy is essential to Fowles's literary oeuvre as a whole and in postmodernist literature in general, and he refers especially to *A Maggot* as a novel that "undertakes the polemical task of questioning the very bases of any certainty (history, subjectivity, and reference)."[36] In a somewhat similar manner, Pamela Cooper notes that in Fowles's fiction the lack of closure not only concerns the "fluctuating indeterminacies of history" but also moral questions about individual freedom. According to Cooper, this moral emphasis makes them different from the novels of Graham Swift and Julian Barnes, which are mainly concerned with the epistemological and philosophical implications of closure.[37] More particularly, Keith M. Booker discusses the question of infinity in relation to the portrayal of sexuality in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and thus touches upon the theme of indeterminacy from this particular point of view, as infinity is by definition that which cannot be determined, which exceeds all boundaries, which escapes every explanatory frame (like the Kantian sublime).[38] This study attempts a more comprehensive and detailed account of this pervasive theme in Fowles's historical

[35] For an early account of mystery and chance in Fowles's fiction, see Wolfe 1976, 36-38.

[36] Salami 1992, 227.

[37] Cooper 1991, 2-3.

[38] See Booker 1991.

fictions and especially of its relation to the questions of genre, narration and ethics.[39]

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The present study draws, first of all, on several genre theories, both general and particular. As regards the general theories, Alastair Fowler's by now classic study *Kinds of Literature* (1982) and its Wittgensteinian idea about genres as types based on family resemblance forms the central theoretical background for the study. However, contemporary literary and genre theories, especially those of post-structuralism, question the idea about literature as communication and about generic conventions as communicative devices, conceptions which Fowler supports. So, Fowler's theoretical suppositions are first critically examined in the study. Moreover, Umberto Eco's semiotic theory on literary semiosis, interpretation and communication is offered as a supplement to Fowler's ideas.

I shall also apply varied theories of particular genres for a better understanding of the literary conventions operative in Fowles's fiction and of their generic hybridity. This application of several particular genre theories necessarily makes the study more or less eclectic, as the modern theories ready to hand stem from varied schools of literary theory. However, I shall occasionally make short excursions to these theories and their explanatory force and/or shortcomings in the practical reading of Fowles's postmodernist fiction.

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[39] There are, of course, several other articles and monographs on Fowles's fiction that touch upon the subjects dealt with in this study and would, therefore, deserve to be mentioned here. Moreover, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* are among the standard works in the studies of postmodernist literature and in the literary histories of contemporary English literature (see e.g. Connor 1996). It would take too much space to enumerate all of these studies and histories here, to say nothing of giving a detailed account of each. However, I shall refer to several of them in the course of the study.

As concerns the overall analysis of narrative conventions in Fowles's fiction, the study applies the concepts introduced by narratology. I am, of course, aware of the challenge post-structuralism and deconstruction has issued to narratology as a systematic literary theory. I believe, however, that the fruits of this discussion lie especially in thought-provoking questions and in producing a new sensitivity of reading.[40] This approach deviates from classical narratology at least in that it takes a step towards combining narratology with ethics, which is one particular way to "redress formalist indifference."[41] In other words, by combining ethics and narrative theory, the study aims to move beyond pure formalism without, however, neglecting the achievements of narratology (hence the term *narrative ethics* in the title of the study[42]). Thus, the study reflects the contemporary turn towards the ethical in the theories of narrative fiction, which is brought forth by several contemporary theoretical works, like Wayne C. Booth's *The Company We Keep* (1988), Adam Zachary Newton's *Narrative Ethics* (1995), James Phelan's *Narrative as Rhetoric. Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (1996), Andrew Gibson's *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel* (1999), and others.

However, to limit the scope of the study, I shall concentrate on analysing the way *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* thematize especially the postmodern ethical principles. Here I shall utilise Andrew Gibson's notions concerning the reciprocity between narrative conventions and postmodern ethical theory. The ethical considerations of the present study are motivated also by the postmodern ethical ideas and social speculations of Zygmunt Bauman and Jean-François Lyotard, whose notions, like Andrew Gibson's, are in several important respects inspired by the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas.

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[40] Cf. Phelan 1996, 8.

[41] Newton 1997, 29.

[42] I have borrowed the term *narrative ethics* from Adam Zachary Newton who asserts that the relation between ethics and narration is a "defining property of prose fiction." He claims that narrative ethics has simultaneously two dimensions: first, it attributes to narrative fiction an ethical status, and second, it refers to "the way ethical discourse often depends on narrative structures" (Newton 1997, 8).

The study of the historical representation of Fowles's fiction is also informed by several different considerations of the openness of modern fiction and art, ranging from structuralist and semiotic approaches to postmodern and post-structuralist notions of narrative and genre. Umberto Eco's considerations concerning the openness of textuality and interpretation are among the central theoretical presuppositions for the study. Eco has from the beginning of his career emphasised the openness of modern fiction and the role of the reader in literary semiosis. Eco's *The Open Work* (1962) created confusion within structuralist circles, as it claimed textual openness and partial indeterminacy of reading and interpretation. In his later works Eco has continued the discussion on the openness of texts and interpretation, relying heavily on Peirce's pragmaticist idea about unlimited literary semiosis. Despite claims for a plurality of possible interpretations, Eco argues against the most radical ideas concerning textual indeterminacy especially in his later works, *The Limits of Interpretation* and *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*.[43] Two other theorists with a structuralist background, Tzvetan Todorov and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, have approached literary ambiguity from particular narratological and genre theoretical stances. The present study applies and critically elaborates on the ideas put forward by Todorov in *The Fantastic* (1970) and Rimmon-Kenan in *The Concept of Ambiguity–the Example of James* (1977) for an analysis of historical representation of Fowles's fiction. However, in order to estimate especially the distinctively postmodernist quality of textual openness, the study refers to Brian McHale's, Linda Hutcheon's and William V. Spanos's views of postmodernist genres that are to different degrees inspired by postmodern philosophical ideas.

Finally, the theory of intertextuality occupies a central position in the following analyses of the representation of history in Fowles's fiction. Intertextual analysis is unavoidable in the study, since intertextuality forms one of the dominant generic conventions of postmodernist fiction. Moreover, intertextuality is a

[43] For further consideration of Eco's later theories of interpretation and the concept of *intentio operis*, see Brax 1997, and below Ch. 2.1.2.

particular way in which *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* construe the representation of history and make comments on matters concerning historiography and philosophy of history. Naturally, genre is in itself an intertextual category, a concept through which texts exist in relation to each other. Accordingly, Gérard Genette deals with genre, or architextuality, as one form of transtextuality, i.e. of all the forms in which texts are related to each other.[44] However, Genette's distinctions are useful only insofar as they are applied to describe the nature of the intertextual relations, because for Genette architextuality is the most "silent" form of transtextuality, i.e. in most cases only implicitly articulated by the literary text itself.[45] Yet despite the fact that it is, thus, rather the task of the reader (i.e. of the literary institution) to determine the generic status of the text, the present study considers genre as a basis for dialogical speech both with history and with preceding literature and their values. Following Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault and others, I see genre as a way to approach and construct the world (or *episteme*) and as a form of thinking, as well as a concept that opens up the perspective of literary analysis historically. At least in genre parody, in open deviations from the generic conventions, which is one of the central intertextual (or transtextual) strategies also in both of Fowles's historical fictions, the question of meaning and interpretation is of great importance.

I shall also examine the more local intertextuality of Fowles's novels. I shall draw on Kiril Taranovsky's method of analysis, and in doing this, I am indebted to Pekka Tammi's presentation and further elaboration of the method.[46] The method approaches intertextual relations–based on concrete allusions, quotations (whether parodic or subversive inversions or not) or stylistic loans–as having hermeneutic potential. That is, when a concrete relationship between two texts

[44] Genette 1997, 1 and passim.

[45] On the other hand, he admits that generic expectations always direct the reading of a particular text (ibid., 4-5). Genette does not approach this question more closely because of his reluctance to deal with hermeneutic questions (cf. ibid., 9).

[46] See Tammi 1980 and 1991.

has been recognised, the second and more important analytical move is to show whether the relationship between the text and its subtext(s) becomes operative in interpretation. In other words, the text and its subtexts are seen in the theoretical model to form together a new interpretative whole. The analysis of this relationship might add to the understanding of the primary text (and sometimes also of the subtext). However, my practical intertextual readings depart or develop the model by seeing both the text and its subtexts as historical, born in a certain cultural, social and philosophical context. Thus, an active intertextual relationship might produce critical dialogue between two culturally or historically different cultures and ways of thinking. Moreover, my analysis reveals the reciprocity between local intertextuality and the generic codes of two texts. Thus, the study suggests that local allusions activate the generic frames of two particular texts, which often result in genre parody and cultural dialogue.

1.4 Contents of the Study

As a method of presentation, the study is arranged into chapters according to the different generic features of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. However, for either literary historical reasons or for the sake of the inner logic of the novels, some particular generic conventions or modes are examined within the same chapters. Thus, the essayistic passages of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* come up in the chapter dealing with the tradition of historical novels, since essayistic narration is a convention in the tradition and thus its integral part. In like manner, the sf features of *A Maggot* are studied together with the analysis of the novel's fantastic narrative pattern, because the reading of the novel as sf is dependent on the innovative fantastic structure of the novel.

The study contains some passages that make use of a more specific comparative procedure. These passages include the analysis of the similarities and differences

between Fowles's novels and other postmodernist historical fictions, the examination of the use and abuse of certain stock motifs of Victorian novels proper in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the comparison made between the representations of the moments of revelation in *Daniel Martin, The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*, and the use of ambiguous narration in some British postmodernist historical fictions of the 1980s. The aim here is to establish interesting points of comparison with Fowles's fiction, and consequently, to assist the evaluation of the relation of Fowles's novels to literary tradition and contemporary fiction.

The content of the study in brief is as follows. Chapter 2 is a theoretical introduction to the main concepts of the study, genre, representation and ethics. It presents the question of representation in the postmodernist historical novel from the point of view of current critical discussion. It argues that (1) even if fiction has distinctive features in the present historical situation, postmodernist historical novels question the boundary between fiction and historiography to a degree and thus point out that fiction and historiography are not universal, completely invariable forms of textuality, (2) that regardless of their self-conscious questioning of historical representation, the representational capacity of the postmodernist historical novel is particularly strong, and (3) that the inherent hesitancy in depicting history is to be considered as an ethical act in postmodernist historical fiction. What is more, it examines the role of genre concepts and theory in the reading and interpretation of fiction. It argues that genre concepts are active in the signification process of fictional narratives in several different ways.

The third and fourth chapters approach both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* together. Chapter 3 aims at specifying the generic and narrative features that make the representation of history in these novels distinctively postmodernist and ethical. It studies the characterisation, intertextuality, paratextuality, metafictionality, anachronisms and essayistic narration of the novels as the constituents of their poetics of mystery. It starts with a short examination of the general aims, or politics of Fowles's historical fiction. The

fourth chapter examines the romance structure of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. It continues the discussion of these novels as historical fictions from another angle by estimating the encounter of the conventions of romance and the historical novel in these texts. Second, it analyses both novels as variations of *The Tempest*, focusing on the play within a play (or, fiction within fiction), a structure common to a number of romances. Moreover, it estimates the nature and literary origins and ethical nature of the moments of revelation portrayed in these two novels. It results in claiming that the romance pattern of Fowles's novels serves to defamiliarise history and in so doing make it unforgettable.

Chapters 5 to 7 concentrate on the respective novels. Chapter 5 continues the discussion of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a neo-Victorian novel. It approaches the rewriting of Victorian motifs and subtexts by examining the representation of its main figure, Sarah Woodruff, analyses the novel as antitragedy, and finally, argues that the novel deals with Victorian sexuality in quite the same way as Michel Foucault later in his *La Volonté de savoir* (1976), the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*. The sixth chapter argues that *A Maggot* applies the fantastic as defined by Todorov as a generic structure. It shows that this structure is utilised repeatedly and inventively at least in British postmodernist historical fictions of the 1980s. It ponders the cultural and literal reasons why the fantastic has become, against Todorov's prediction, dominant in contemporary fiction. Chapter 7 examines *A Maggot* as metaphysical detective fiction and makes an effort to show that the breaking of the classical detective pattern is thematised for particular, ethical reasons.

The Epilogue concludes the study by gathering and estimating the acquired results. It sums up how the use of different genre patterns and narrative conventions serve the theme of indeterminacy in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. Moreover, drawing on the genre analyses of the present study, it

reflects on genre as a theoretical concept, and especially, on the intertextual nature of genre and genre parody.[47]

[47] Portions of Chapter 6 have been published before in Finnish (Brax 1998). The intertextual analysis of Chapter 5.2. is presented in a different form in an academic textbook as an example of the possibilities of genre analysis in literary studies (Brax 2001). Chapter 5.3 was presented in a slightly condensed form at the 25th annual conference of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature (IAPL) in Atlanta, USA, 2 May 2001, under the title "Probing the Beginnings of a Theory: Fowles and Foucault on Victorian Sexuality."

CHAPTER 2: GENRE, REPRESENTATION AND HISTORY

2.1 What Determines Reading? Genres, Reading and Interpretation

2.1.1 Genre and Interpretation

A widely-held view in modern literary theory is that genre has a special role in the production, reading and interpretation of a literary text. This notion has for the most part replaced both the historical imitation theories that have their origin in antiquity and that prevailed for two thousand years, until the late eighteenth century,[48] and the theories of systematic classification of genres stemming from the Romantic period.[49]

Alastair Fowler has put forward one of the most influential modern views about the role played by genre concepts when reading and interpreting fiction. As this view forms the central theoretical point of departure of the present study, it deserves to be introduced and evaluated in the following at some length.[50]

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[48] Todorov 1982, 112.

[49] For further discussion on the subject, see Brax 2001, passim.

[50] Drawing on the philosophy of later Wittgenstein, Fowler considers genre as a type based on

Fowler conceives genre as a means for reading and interpreting of literary works rather than as a device for generic classification. He claims that genre is the most central of the codes that strengthen the redundancies of literary utterance, thus affecting in the affirmative the readability of fiction and the pleasure of reading. For instance, the use of thematic similarities or stock characters, or other forms of repetition of narrative conventions within a certain genre, create a sense of familiarity in the reader, thus working as vehicles for reading and literary communication.[51]

As genre concepts exercise an effect on the reading process, they also have a special role in interpreting a text. According to Fowler, the construing of genre, i.e. the defining of the *generic horizon* of a literary work, should precede its interpretation. That is, the text should first be situated in and read according to the genre system that prevailed at the birth of the work, even if innovative interpretations always challenge the original meanings of literature. The construing of the generic horizon is important, as the reader is always aware of the strangeness of old literature and as the knowledge of prior interpretations helps an interpreter to see his or her historical position as a reader.[52] Moreover, some inexplicable-looking passages of ancient literature become understandable only when it is noticed that they put into operation some historical and forgotten generic convention. I would like to add here that the strangeness of the generic conventions of a text often results from the fact that sometimes the text has its origin in a different culture or subculture. Therefore, to define the generic horizon of the text is also to attempt to locate it culturally.[53]

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family resemblance and not as a definite class (1982, 40-58). For a summary account of his general view of genre as a theoretical concept, see Brax 2001, 117-119.

[51] Fowler 1982, 21-22.

[52] On different grounds, but resulting almost in the same as Croce's criticism, Barthes argued in his later, post-structuralist period that genre concepts are practically insignificant, since the reader of fiction is confronted by an endless flow of contradictory signals and codes (Dubrow 1982, 84-85).

[53] For instance, some conventional, overcoded expressions in American gangsta-rap poetry certainly remain incomprehensible for at least a foreign audience without former knowledge of

However, it seems that to apply generic codes in interpreting particular texts does not produce interpretation as straightforwardly as Fowler's theory suggests. Consequently, David Fishelov argues in response to Fowler that the interpretation of a text is a dialectic between what the individual text signals on the one hand, and the readers' assumptions and expectations based on a sense of genre, on the other.[54] I believe that Fishelov's description of the process of interpretation as a complicated process is to the point:

> [T]he specific text activates our relevant knowledge and assumptions concerning various genres of whose tradition the text reminds us, and those generic frameworks contribute, on their part, to our understanding and integrating various elements of the specific text. Interpreting the text involves generic knowledge, as well as other types of knowledge, but it is by no means *determined* by this knowledge.[55]

Fishelov warns against emphasising that genre concepts are simple keys that unlock the meanings of a text or devices that without the text would be completely incomprehensible.[56] According to Fishelov, "sensible and sensitive" reading of the text seems to familiarise the reader with most generic conventions.[57]

Yet I believe that the truth lies somewhere in between these two views. Fishelov remarks correctly, in my view, that interpretation of a text is more complicated than the simple application of a generic code. He also shows that this might sometimes be a secondary matter and work rather as a heuristic device than as a simple "mechanism that produces an interpretation."[58] On this point, Fishelov's criticism holds. However, there seem to be more texts that do not as

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these conventions and their origin in the particular subculture and its language.

[54] Fishelov 1993, 26

[55] Ibid., emphasis original.

[56] See also Reichert 1978, 64.

[57] Ibid., 27.

[58] Ibid.

straightforwardly signal the generic conventions operative in them than he seems to believe, not just some marginal poems that can also be read backwards.[59] Especially, as Fowler notes, new kinds of texts seem to play with generic conventions and use generic tradition in unexpected ways so as to put to the test readers' ability to interpret these texts in all their richness.[60] For instance, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 5.2, the recognition that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* actually parodies the biological (neo-Darwinian) or naturalistic tragedy of late Victorian literature seems to open a new and deeper understanding of the novel and its ideological aim. To ignore these kinds of meanings and interpretations just because they might not be evident for the "casual reader" would result in an impoverishment of the textual possibilities of literature.

Furthermore, it must be remembered that ancient texts are sometimes also "new" for casual readers. We only need to consider, for instance, a text like Aristophanes's *Frogs* (*Batrakhoi*, 405 BC), which parodies several conventions of classical tragedy, to understand that there are texts that are not completely intelligible without the knowledge of ancient generic conventions and of the historical and cultural background of the text in question. To give another example, it would be very difficult for the modern "casual reader" to infer from Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) the fact that the novel applies the conventions of the late-Victorian biological tragedy. The knowledge of this generic code and its cultural origin makes the novel more understandable as it clarifies the interaction between the late-Victorian cultural scene and the novel's portrayal of the fall of the heroine and, more generally, the decline of the whole family of the aristocratic d'Urbervilles.[61]

What is in fact meant by sensible and sensitive reading? Even though Fishelov speaks about the reader's relevant knowledge and assumptions, it seems as if he would in reality stand for a conservative notion of a literary text as self-sufficient

[59] Ibid., 27n22.

[60] Fowler 1982, 260.

[61] See below Ch. 5.1.

and completely autonomous, a crystal-like entity independent of the reader's role as a producer of meaning, an idea characteristic of New Criticism and early structuralism. On the contrary, I believe that reading is sensible in most cases precisely because of the generic and other literary and cultural knowledge. This seems to be the case even though generic competence often functions spontaneously and unreflectively.[62]

Genre theory has been questioned from various perspectives in this century.[63] Before estimating other functions of genre it seems, therefore, reasonable to dwell on other recently disputed questions about genres and their role in reading.

David Perkins offers some reservations about the practical value of genres in reading and interpretation. He considers Fowler's Wittgensteinian view of genre as partially correct, a step in the right direction. However, he claims that it is not enough to look for similarities between texts to produce genre types: defining the family resemblance of different texts also requires that their historical affiliation be taken into consideration. Thus Perkins stresses the importance of dealing also with the historical and cultural issues involved in genre categorisation, and I agree with him on this point.

However, he also argues that the role of genre concepts in the reading and producing of texts has been overestimated. Perkins mentions first that many contemporary theorists claim that genres become transformed in time, that texts congregate various features of distinct genres, and that texts in a genre are connected only by family resemblance. From these notions, correct in themselves, he reaches the following conclusion:

> Given these emphases, it seems that very different works may belong to the same genre and that a work may belong to different genres. If this is so, the actual role of genre concepts in the production and reception of works must often be less than genre theorists suppose. Because it depends so

[62] Gerhardt 1992, 159.

[63] For a general account of the subject, see Brax 2001, 120-125.

> heavily on constructions of the literary historian, the description of a genre may be no less creative than the writing of literary history is generally.[64]

A closer look at this argument reveals, however, a theoretical problem: it does not follow from the given premises that the role of genre in reading and producing a text would be unsubstantial. Readers might read a text according to different generic expectations, but this still does not prove that genre concepts are of no importance in reading or writing. It can still be claimed that readers use, in every case, intentionally or unintentionally, generic codes, whether modern or ancient, whether the same or different, whether correct or incorrect, in order to read texts.

Indeed, one should not too hastily draw a general conclusion from the notion that genre theorists and literary historians have classified texts as belonging to different types. This observation is not original in any sense. Maybe more attention should be paid here to Fowler's cautious effort to explain that overlapping categorisations are often the result of incompetent estimations of the generic nature of texts. In particular, Fowler claims that the existence of overlapping categorisations of different texts are the result, at least in some cases, of ignorance of the fact that the generic concepts used to define the types of literary text belong to a different level of abstraction (historical genre, subgenre, mode, constructional type).[65] Perkins does not comment on this claim.

Perkins's conclusion seems odd also because the theorists he refers to draw no such radical conclusion from the same premises. On the contrary, they still speak for the significance of genre concepts in reading. For instance, genre theorists often claim that it is precisely the mixed nature of texts that makes the reading exciting, challenging, and pleasurable, instead of seeing the hybridisation as a problem. Accordingly, Perkins does not point to the fact that Bakhtin, for example, wrote his apotheosis of the novel just because he saw that the novel is the most elusive of all literary genres and capable of combining different generic conventions and speech genres, i.e. the speech of different social strata.

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[64] Perkins 1992, 80.

[65] Fowler 1982, 54-56.

Perkins seems to suggest also that readings of old texts according to new generic concepts are always suspicious.[66] However, there must be made a distinction between those readings that are subjective and unsystematic and those that rely on several different kinds of textual and contextual knowledge. Consequently, I find Fowler's use of the term *georgic poetry*, a notion that Perkins adopts as an example to prove his claim, well grounded theoretically, as it is based on accurate cultural and historical information and textual evidence. Fowler's generic reading seems to reveal important literary historical knowledge of Renaissance literature that would otherwise go unrecognised. There is nothing new in the idea that some generic conventions work unconsciously in the reading process or at least are not marked down as aesthetic or poetic principles by contemporaries, and therefore, they can be coined only afterwards. For instance, the term *metaphysical detective fiction*, applied in this study in Chapter 7, is also a modern generic concept that makes us more aware of old historical literary conventions and of their heritage in contemporary fiction.

2.1.2 Genre and Communication

As we have seen, Fowler sees literature as a form of communication and genre as an important device in the communication process. Several genre theorists share this idea. They claim that literary communication is dependent on the notion of genre as a social institution. In other words, they maintain that the shared perception of a literary text depends on the intersubjective, culturally shared generic codes of reading. However, post-structuralism and deconstruction have questioned the idea of literature as communication. As for genre concepts as communicative devices, Jacques Derrida's critical contribution to the debate with his article 'The Law of Genre' (1980) has been especially influential. If these critical arguments could be sustained, they would be fatal to literary theories

[66] Perkins 1992, 77-80.

based on the idea of literature as communication, including Fowler's genre theoretical view, Eco's semiotic theory of literary communication, or James Phelan's theory of narrative as rhetoric.[67] In the following, therefore, I shall first offer a brief overview of the current discussion on the subject and in so doing present the theoretical premise for the subsequent genre analyses.

Before moving on to the question of communication proper, let us, however, start with a brief sketch of Derrida's genre theoretical view. Derrida emphasises the singularity of each work regardless of its participation in any particular genre. He argues in 'The Law of Genre' that paradoxically each individual work both belongs to a genre and defies its borders: "Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging."[68] According to Derrida, a genre concept not only defines the text, "gathers together the corpus," but also "keeps it from closing, from identifying itself with itself."[69] In other words, there is always something impure and superfluous in every individual text, which resists its complete identification with a particular genre.[70] This assessment of the nature of genre as paradoxical seems to me to be correct insofar as it recalls the impossibility of comprehensively accounting for texts in all their individuality and particularity by means of generic concepts. Yet it seems to me that in practice the reading of a text must start from the notion that every text always at least "participates" in a genre or genres. Indeed, I assume that a certain kind of genre-consciousness is always inscribed in the writing and reading processes.

However, Derrida's view of the unlimited polysemy of textuality seems to be even more at odds with the theories of genre and narrative supporting the idea of literature as communication than his general view about the law of genre. In his

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[67] See Fowler 1982, Eco 1979, and Phelan 1996.

[68] Derrida 1980, 230. Derrida's article has been read, on the one hand, as a parody of the structuralist endeavour to determine the laws of literature, and, on the other hand, as a return to the once so furious Neoclassical battles over the nature of genres (Duff 2000, 5–6 and 219).

[69] Derrida 1980, 230.

[70] Ibid.

essay 'Signature Event Context' (1982) Derrida argues in response to Austin's model of literary communication that a text has a meaning only within a context but that there are limitless contexts of reading.[71] Thus, the sender cannot address the text to any particular addressee, and therefore the "polysemy is infinite."[72]

This idea that a text has meaning only in a context and that there are, in principle, limitless contexts of reading, historically and culturally, seems reasonable. There are no grounds for thinking that the reading of a literary text is simply communication between the author and reader even if this were reasonable in some cases or to a certain degree. Yet it is equally important to note that there are also qualitative differences between different readings and interpretations. Most importantly, as Umberto Eco has convincingly shown, a reading of a text is not independent of a text as a text.[73] That is, a text resists some interpretations and the application of certain codes of reading. There is always the possibility to read differently, but there is also the possibility to read improperly, in a way that does not do justice to the text as a text, to its *intentio operis*.[74]

Literary interpretation is, thus, a dialectic between fidelity and creativity.[75] On the one hand, the addressee of a literary text is often culturally and historically remote and thus other than the author could possibly have foreseen. Hence, to repeat the point made earlier, the text is regularly read in highly heterogeneous, unforeseen contexts, often in effect signifying something that could not have been the original intention of the author. In general, this lends the interpretation process an aura of indeterminacy. On the other hand, a text is often explicated more appropriately within the original codes of interpretation (i.e. also within the original generic horizon), since they seem to open up the text more

[71] Derrida 1982, 322 and passim.

[72] Derrida 1981, 253.

[73] Eco 1981, 9.

[74] Eco 1994, 44-63 and 1992a, 64-65 and passim.

[75] Eco 1979, 275-276.

comprehensively than modern ones.[76] So, to read a text according to original historical reading codes, including original generic codes, often serves to explain its details and their relation to the textual whole more efficiently than recent ones.[77] This notion recalls Fowler's idea that the text should be read against the original generic horizon, even if there is always the possibility of trying to estimate its contemporary significance or place in literary history through reading it in another, more recent, perhaps critical interpretative context or with a new code of interpretation.

Following this logic, Eco argues most importantly that a literary text always retains and signifies something of its cultural, literary and ideological origin.[78] In this respect, we can still speak about communication or dialogue between different cultures and historical eras and their values and philosophical notions. This view is also ethically vital, as it respects the historical and cultural otherness of a particular text.[79] The view is also in accordance with James Phelan's idea that even if authorial intention is not "fully recoverable" and does not control response, "we encounter something other than ourselves" while "reading rhetorically."[80] Eco's view of literary interpretation still makes it possible to claim that not all that we see in the text is just our own projection, as, among others, Stanley Fish seems to claim, but that we are reading out and affectively facing something that is often both historically and culturally diverse.[81]

Eco's argument that an old text always retains at least something of its historical otherness, i.e. produces knowledge "about the circumstances and the codes (indeed all the norms) of a given artistic period," also lends theoretical support to

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[76] For Eco's ideas on the proper conjuncture on the part of the reader and on the Peircean idea of abduction, see Eco 1994, 59 and Brax 1997, 27.

[77] Eco 1994, 59-60.

[78] Eco 1979, 276.

[79] See Ch. 2.1.3.

[80] Phelan 1996, 19.

[81] If the question is approached from the point of view of Levinas's ethical theory, I believe it is correct to claim that Eco's theoretical stance conforms rather to Saying (*le Dire*) than to the Said (*le Dit*), because his ideas respect the otherness of historical being (cf. Levinas 1981).

one of genre theory's general ideas, namely that writing in a certain genre is often a *comment* on a particular historical genre, a particular text of the genre, or on the culture that produced those texts.[82] In other words, these claims about the working of genre as a parodic, satirical or ideological tool would be groundless, if it was not theoretically possible to approach the historical diversity of a text and to define, at least to some degree, the cultural factors that produced those texts and the different genres, however incomplete and indeterminate these conjectures must remain.

This idea of genre as a device for historical, literary or cultural criticism, used also in the present study as a working hypothesis, has been put forward by several genre theorists. Theorists considered to belong to different theoretical and methodological schools, such as structuralism, post-structuralism or the sociology of genres, seem to find common ground here. For instance, Todorov has argued that historical and cultural communication via genre is possible merely because genres are the products of the intersection of historical actuality and the given discursive potential. Todorov claims that

> [E]ach epoch has its own system of genres, which stands in some relation to the dominant ideology, and so on. Like any other institution, genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong.[83]

Genres are thus historical and cultural institutions, which makes it also a critical activity to write in a particular genre.

Furthermore, those genre analyses that apply Foucault's views put forward the contextual idea that the birth of a genre is determined by the cultural and historical milieu. Foucault's theory has been seen to offer the possibility of tracing the connections between the birth of a certain literary genre and the simultaneous changes in other discourses. Consequently, Foucauldian genre

[82] Eco 1979, 276 and Dubrow 1982, 29-30.

[83] Todorov 2000, 200.

analysis tries to answer the question "where do genres come from" or "what is their function" rather than "what is genre." In other words, Foucauldian genre analysis shifts the emphasis from questions of identity to functional and genealogical questions.[84] In fact, I believe that it is vital to pay attention to genres functioning as rhetorical, ideological and world-making institutions as well as to the contextual questions about the origin of genres. However, it is not possible and fruitful to completely separate functional and genealogical questions from those of textual identity, since the cultural functions of literature are not independent of the literary text as a poetic and rhetorical apparatus: different kinds of texts produce different kinds of effects.

One aspect of this functioning of genre as a communicative and ideological device is the idea that old genres carry antiquated ways of seeing and conceptualising the world. Mikhail Bakhtin, for whom genres are forms of thinking, endorses this view. Bakhtin speaks of *genre-memory*: some old genre and its way of seeing the world might indirectly influence a contemporary literary text, and thus a modern text might also create tension between the historical and contemporary forms of thinking. Bakhtin's example is the generic relationship and interplay between Dostoyevsky's novels and Menippean satire. As Bakhtin's genre analysis shows, there may well exist remote but active connections between texts and rather old and culturally remote genres.[85] This connection might, of course, result either in silently promoting the form of thinking that an old genre represents or in genre parody that function as a satirical approach to the old values and world-views it carries.

2.1.3 Genre and Ethics

Postmodern ethics has influenced contemporary narrative theory, and as we shall see, also seems to have a vital bearing on genre theory. The issue is of great

[84] Bové 1995, 55-56

[85] For further consideration on the matter, see Morson & Emerson 1990, 270-297.

importance in the context of the present study, as postmodern ethical theory and its application to literary criticism seems to reveal another manner in which ideology works through narrative and genre. More particularly, its present significance is in the fact that in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*, as well as in several other works of postmodernist fiction, the narrative seems to be organised more or less in a way that conforms to the principles of postmodern ethical theory. In the following, I shall introduce the postmodern ethical perspective and its application to narrative theory. After that, I shall offer a brief outline of the relevance of these ethical considerations for genre theory.

According to Gibson, the ethical resides in the indeterminable. Therefore, postmodern ethics rejects all those approaches to morality that emphasise universal and categorical principles as the basis of argumentation, such as Christian theology, Aristotelian teleology, and the Enlightenment project. Instead, postmodern ethics does not even seek to establish a secular, universal or objective morality on rational grounds, and does not believe that reality is comprehensible in any terms that suggest essences, static identity, or a whole. In other words, postmodern ethics is non-foundational and non-ontological. Moreover, postmodern ethics emphasises immediacy and the singularity of ethical relations. Drawing on the ideas of Levinas, postmodern ethical theory considers as inadequate every frame in which we seek to place the other.[86]

Zygmunt Bauman claims that the postmodern moral condition has the following distinguishing characteristics: morality is essentially ambivalent, aporetic, irrational, and not universalisable; moral phenomena are inherently non-rational and not repeatable, regular, monotonous and predictable; moral responsibility is "the first reality of the self, a starting point rather than a product of society." Moral responsibility is, therefore, "a mystery contrary to reason." Yet it is also "the act of self-constitution." However, Bauman argues that "the postmodern perspective on moral phenomena *does not reveal the relativism* of morality." Instead, the postmodern perspective reveals the parochialism of modern universal

[86] Gibson 1999, 16-17 and passim.

ethical principles.[87] Similarly, Jean-François Lyotard sees that knowledge and ethical positions are in the present cultural situation legitimated only by discontinuous, relative and temporary small narratives (*petits récits*) and not by any totalitarian, teleological and universal grand narratives (*grands récits*) like Marxism, Christianity, or the development of sciences.[88]

The postmodern ethical theory has an important bearing on the theory of narrative fiction. As Gibson argues, the postmodern ethical perspective makes us see anew especially the object-subject relations that are produced in every act of narration.[89] In other words, the estimation of the ethical nature of the relation between narrator and narrated is of vital concern in the study of narrative fiction. The question is, in short, whether the narrator claims to possess conclusively the other person (or historical era, etc.) with his narrative and to have full control over the story. This has much to do, of course, with the different modes of narration, but the distinctions between these modes do not completely determine it. Indeed, as Gibson shows, the same kind of narrator, for instance the extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator, can either respect or depreciate the unattainable alterity of his or her characters.[90] As I see it, this postmodern ethical perspective is a special addition to the narratological theory concerning the unreliable narrator and narrative irony.[91] That is, the moral or ironic distance between implied author and the narrator can also be assessed according how well the narrator claims to know and understand his or her characters.

The postmodern ethical theory of narrative could be seen to have a special impact on genre theory, because certain modes of narration seem to become institutionalised as conventions of distinctive genres in certain historical and stylistic periods. Of importance here is that certain historical genres appear to

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[87] Bauman 1993, 10-15 and passim.

[88] For further consideration on Lyotard's ideas and on his views about the legacy of the Enlightenment (contra Jürgen Habermas), see below Ch. 7.3.

[89] Gibson 1999, 25-29.

[90] Ibid., 26-27.

[91] See e.g. Booth 1983, 158-159.

maintain narrative conventions or modes that work ideologically either more or less in accordance with or against postmodern ethical principles. Thus, literary scholars can estimate, say, the kind of relation historical fiction holds to the historically and culturally other in particular historical and stylistic periods, or the ethical nature of the application of narrative conventions in a certain literary genre, for instance, in classical detective fiction.

Consequently, a central premise of the present study is that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* use narrative and generic conventions more or less in accordance with the postmodern ethical principles mentioned. So, the question of the ethics of narration and representation runs throughout the present study. Moreover, the study aims to show that the question of the ethics of narrating and representing the other is thematised precisely through a certain kind of use of generic conventions in the novels.

2.2 The Representation of History in Postmodernist Fiction

> It is not that representation now dominates or effaces the referent, but that it now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation–that is, as interpreting (and indeed, as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it.[92]

One apparent aim of postmodernist historical fiction has been to question the possibility of a realistic representation of history. This is one of the main reasons why the genre bears the imprint of "the acceptance of radical uncertainty."[93] This particular literary ethos is an instance of the relativism that has taken place in postmodern thought as a whole. The theorists of post-structuralism and

[92] Hutcheon 1991, 116.

[93] Hutcheon 1989, 97.

deconstruction almost completely denied the mimetic function of representation and reference, which also influenced the postmodern discussion on literature.[94] Recent literary criticism has, however, paid more attention to the representational aspects of postmodernist historical fictions. For instance, Aleid Fokkema claims that especially in British postmodernist fictions "the referential potential" is remarkably strong and that in them the mimetic function of language is not questioned outright.[95]

In the following, I shall try to characterise the representational aspects of the postmodernist historical novel in general. First, I briefly introduce the current relativistic view of historical knowledge and estimate the claim, put forward especially by Hayden White, that historical narratives can be equated with fictional narratives. Then I describe the general themes of postmodernist historical novels, themes that in many ways grow from the questioning of an authentic and unmediated representation of history. Finally I outline the ethical functions of the questioning of representation in postmodernist historical fiction.

2.2.1 Relativism

Let us now examine the current relativist view of historical knowledge and representation. One major ground for it is undoubtedly the linguistic turn and the

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[94] As Linda Hutcheon points out, it would not be correct to claim that postmodern thought would have simply replaced representation with surface textuality and denied the fact, emphasised in sociology and cultural studies repeatedly, that people's experiences of the world are nowadays utterly "mediated by representations." Hutcheon refers to Derrida's argument about the inescapability of the logic of representation and to the way Foucault problematises but never repudiates "our traditional modes of representation in our discourses of knowledge." (Hutcheon 1991, 115.)

[95] Fokkema 1991, 141. Fokkema mentions that in American fiction too the representational potential is stronger than estimated (ibid.). For the arguments that support the view that there has occurred a return to representationalism in postmodernist fiction, see also Gibson 1999, 92 and 1996, 69-73, Barth 1980, passim and Hutcheon 1980, 70.

new understanding of textuality that predominated twentieth-century Western thought and that, consequently, affected the discussion both on historiography and on literary criticism. As Elisabeth Wesseling notes, the role of linguistic and literary conventions in rendering empirical reality and the historical past are currently conceived as essential in both. Literary theorists have directed their attention to the discursive strategies that conduct the creation of *l'effet du réel* (i.e. the reality effect)[96] in fiction. In the philosophy of history the role of constructing a narrative out of empirical data currently occupies a central role. For instance, properties like causality and teleology have been claimed to be linguistic phenomena and not a part of historical reality.[97] The new understanding of history as textual also gave rise to a particular literary theory, *new historicism*. New historicism considers history as not directly accessible and unitary, but as a plural, continually changing construction that is repeatedly adjusted to different present purposes.[98]

In the philosophy of history the linguistic turn (or narrative turn) has fed historical relativism in different degrees.[99] Hayden White, whose views are my main interest here, has even claimed that all stories, including historical ones, are fictions.[100] This radical equation of fiction and scientific historical narratives, an attempt to blur the generic borderline between them, is worth considering more closely here, since it opens up a vital perspective on the problem of historical representation in postmodernist novels. Moreover, I shall estimate his view in the light of Dorrit Cohn's recent criticism of it.

According to Hayden White, a historical work is, "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse,"[101] "a verbal artifact, a product of a special kind of

[96] See Barthes 1993.

[97] Wesseling 1991, 28, 128.

[98] Cox & Reynolds 1993, 4.

[99] Siegfried Kracauer, Paul Ricoeur, Hayden White and F. R. Ankersmith are among the philosophers who emphasise the narrativity of history.

[100] White 1999, 9.

[101] White 1975, ix.

language use."[102] He believes that histories have a poetic and linguistic structure, and that every narrative history relies on certain basic linguistic tropes. The four tropes every historical narrative is based on, according to White, are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Moreover, White is influenced by the genre theory of Northrop Frye. White adapts Frye's central idea of the four elementary plots to his theory of historical narratives. These basic or pregeneric plots are, according to Frye, romance, tragedy, comedy, and irony-satire. White considers these as the four basic modes of the emplotment of history.

In his article from 1992 White describes his relativist view of historical knowledge. He also outlines his relationship to the question of realism in historical representation (both in history and fiction). Pointing to the discursivity of history, he claims that "[t]he relativity of the representation [representation of historical phenomena] is a function of the language used to describe and thereby constitute past events as possible objects of explanation and understanding."[103] While illustrating the problem of realism and representation with the Holocaust as his extreme example, he follows his main idea already advanced in *Metahistory*, that a historical event can be described in several different modes of writing and that there is no getting outside the order of discourse because stories are always linguistic artefacts. In other words, he denies that there could be an ontological difference between an interpretation of historical facts and a story told about them.[104] Interestingly, he asserts that the realism of modern historical writing grows out of using modern narrative techniques like interior monologue or the omniscient narrator.[105] This for him is the way the representation of history

[102] White 1999, 4.

[103] Ibid., 27.

[104] Ibid., 29.

[105] Ibid., Ch. 2.

can reach the "experiences that are unique to our century [like the Holocaust] and for which the older modes of representation have proven to be inadequate."[106]

However, there are some reservations to be made over White's notions of the similarities of historical and fictional narratives. As Dorrit Cohn has recently shown, White speaks solely about the plot (emplotment) and linguistic tropes as the basic elements and invariants of all narratives and disregards the discourse level of a narrative. In narratology, it is widely accepted that the elements of plot forms only one linguistic level of a narrative and that the discourse level is the other.[107] So, it is vital to consider whether there are differences in the discourse level of fictional and historiographic narratives. Cohn believes that there are; she offers as an example the distinctive way fiction represents the inner life and thoughts of the characters. Historiography, Cohn claims, does not represent the inner states of historical characters accordingly. Thus, fictional narratives seem to have linguistic features that historical narratives do not.[108]

I would like to extend this criticism to concern also the view White applies to his theory about the generic nature of fictional narratives. The four basic plot structures discussed by Frye represent only the invariant pregeneric plots of all narratives. In literature, they are often blended with the historical genres and subgenres and their conventions and stylistics in order to form new kinds of combinations. In other words, there is, of course, a rich tradition of different genres in the history of fiction, as well as in historiography, too. It might be argued that ignoring these generic traditions is to forget that generic conventions play a great role in the reception, as well as production of texts.[109] In other words, generic expectations as institutionalised criteria play a great role in making a distinction between fiction and historical narratives.

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[106] Ibid., 42. White offers Primo Levi's *Il Sistema periodico* (1975) as an example of this kind of historical narrative or representation. It is interesting that White's idea here refers to something outside language, namely to actual historical experiences.

[107] Cohn 1999, 114.

[108] Ibid., 117-123.

[109] See above Ch. 2.1.

If we, then, still accept the basic idea that histories are substantially narratives and thus always something mediated through language and determined by poetic structures, this does not entail that fiction and historical narratives could be equated as easily as White has done. There are differences in the narrative and generic features and in the reading conventions of historical narratives and fiction.[110]

Yet instead of agreeing unconditionally with Cohn's argument, I consider the linguistic features of fiction and historiography historically relative. The reason for this view is that the relationship between story and discourse seems to be historically and culturally conditioned. I believe that there occur historical changes in both the story and discourse levels of historiography and fiction and that there are certain interrelationships between these different practices. Here we are faced with the phenomena that Saussure tried to prevent, namely "the entry of diachrony *into* synchrony–the entry of history into our current experience and current struggles."[111]

Indeed, Lionel Gossman has shown that "at any given time there tend to be many points of resemblance between the discourse of historians and that of novelists."[112] He shows, for instance, that both eighteenth-century fiction (say, *Jacques le fataliste* by Diderot) and historiography (Voltaire, Hume, Gibbon) are characterised by the distinction between story and discourse and that they both give weight to the latter:

> The ultimate unifying center of eighteenth-century historical writing, it has been said, is the narrator himself rather than the narrative of events: the latter exists largely as a pretext for "philosophical" commentary, and for the sake of the community of *philosophes* that this commentary was expected to establish between narrator and reader, and among readers.

[110] White 1999 speaks about farce as one possible mode of historical writing, but he does not refer to the rich generic tradition of fiction.

[111] Attridge 1989, 199.

[112] Gossman 1990, 243.

> History, in this important respect, was not essentially different from fiction, and d'Alembert's remark that the writings of Tacitus "would not lose much if we were to consider them only as the first and truest of philosophical novels" probably did not seem as odd or shocking to the eighteenth-century reader as it does to us, or at least as it must have done to the serious nineteenth-century reader.[113]

Moreover, Gossman claims that both the nineteenth-century historiography and fiction replaced the overt narrator of the eighteenth-century historical narratives with a covert narrator, so as to reject the narrative conventions of the Enlightenment.[114] Dorrit Cohn neglects this view, emphasising as it does the historicity of the story and discourse distinction in historiography.

If the concept of fiction is in principle historically, diachronically conditioned, what then determines our understanding of what is fiction? An interesting response to this question is given by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen. They claim that fiction should be seen as determined by the mode of utterance (*fictive utterance*) located in a social practice rather than being an assembly of certain distinctive linguistic or stylistic features. According to them, some social, cultural and institutional circumstances make the utterance of a text as fiction possible. This view is, however, compatible with the idea that fiction might have distinctive features when compared to other discourses: the reader often recognises fiction precisely because of these features. As Lamarque and Olsen point out, it is nevertheless difficult to ground a convincing theory on these features, as they are historically relative and changing.[115]

To sum up the discussion so far, there seems to be a distinction between the narrative techniques of historiography and fiction. White and other supporters of

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid., 244.

[115] See Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 32-40. Cf. Tammi 1995, 371. It was confronting precisely this difficulty in genre theory that led Fowler to claim that genres are best defined in terms of family resemblance and not according to some definite, unchanging properties (see above Ch 2.1.1).

the linguistic or narrative turn in historiography have not been able to show convincingly that historiography would not differ in its narrative features and conventions from fiction in the present historical and cultural context. Moreover, the reading conventions and institutionalised criteria are such that people in general do not read historiography as fiction–even if they, of course, might sometimes disagree with it and claim that it is "fiction" rather than truthful description of historical event. Thus, White's argument seems overstated.

Yet, we must acknowledge at least in principle that there occur changes in the narrative features, the reading conventions and institutional status of both historiography and fiction. So, the effort to efface the generic boundaries between different types of discourses that postmodernist fiction and philosophy are engaged with are not just pretensions as Cohn seems to believe.[116] Instead, postmodernist literature makes the reader feel uneasy about current reading conventions and institutionalised criteria for fiction and historiography.[117] For instance, the self-conscious problematising of the generic borderline between scientific biography and novelistic discourse in Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens* (1990) is an expression of the metacritical mood found both in the current philosophy of history, postmodernist fiction, and postmodern culture in general.[118] In conclusion, postmodernist texts question at least to a degree the simple distinction

[116] Cohn 1999, vii.

[117] Cf. Nünning 1997, 217 and passim.

[118] For example, the biography includes an unconventional chapter in which the author (narrator) discusses with an anonymous interviewer the ontological status of biographies and their similarities with novelistic discourse. Even if the author solely argues that the only similarity between them is the effort to impose a coherent structure on the world, this same argument produces doubt in the reader's mind and poses the question about the ontological status of Charles Dickens in the biography (or historical novel). Other parts of the text thematise this question as well (cf. *D*, 794: "Biographers are simply novelists without imagination!"). Moreover, the narrator has access to Dickens's mind (cf. *D*, 530: "[H]e looked across the mountains; all the time thinking of the work in hand.") Even if the text should be considered a biography, i.e. a particular kind of historiographic narrative, it at least occasionally adopts the narrative conventions of novelistic discourse.

between fiction and historiography and affect cultural and institutionalised reading practices.

2.2.2 Ethics and Themes

> [T]here might be an ethical dimension to the relation to the indeterminable itself.[119]

Besides attempting to efface generic borderlines, postmodernist historical fiction thematises the problem of historical representation in many other ways. The questioning of the epistemological limits of historical knowledge is known to be one of the most important ones. This questioning happens via the metafictional structure of these novels, which Linda Hutcheon sees as the most important characteristic of the genre. She even names the genre *historiographic metafiction* according to this feature.[120] Examples abound. For instance, both Fowles's novels can be seen as foregrounding this problematic issue, albeit differently, as will be shown in detail later. Another example is Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987) that gives plausible and competing explanation for the official historical record of the death of Thomas Chatterton. It describes the death not as a romantic suicide (*felo de se*) but as the consequence of Chatterton's fatal error in treating himself against gonorrhoea. Is there any convincing evidence for either view?[121] This narrative, thus, denaturalises the conventions of representing the past in narrative, whether historical or fictitious.

Hutcheon's notions concerning the nature of the genre seem to be to the point generally. Her main argument is that historiographic metafiction is paradoxical as

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[119] Gibson 1999, 11.

[120] Cf. e.g. Hutcheon 1988, passim.

[121] It is important to note that the problem is epistemological and not ontological: *Chatterton* does not here claim that there would be no historical truth; it only questions our possibility of ever *knowing* that truth.

a genre since it has the ability to be both self-reflexive and historical at the same time. For her, historiographic metafiction is rather questioning than simply subversive.[122] It informs the postmodern debates about the nature of subjectivity, power and historical knowledge. According to Hutcheon, postmodernist fiction questions historical representation, asserts that literature and history are both textual and intertextual, and challenges "the humanist faith in the individual as free, unified, coherent, and consistent."[123]

I want further to argue that the representation of history in postmodernist historical novels ought to be taken seriously despite the implicit questioning of historical knowledge in these novels. Contemporary historiographical theory has taken up questions that seem to encourage new kinds of approaches to postmodernist historical fiction. For instance, it has been argued that it is not only the historiographers who bring history alive, but that many kinds of representations of history in the form of old objects, old buildings, tv series, novels, etc., are equally important in constructing our image of the past.[124] Thus, it is motivated to analyse these different representations of history since they play an important role in constructing the popular image of the past. Because of the popularity of several postmodern historical novels, Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (*Il nome della rosa*, 1980) or Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, this question is certainly relevant in this context. We cannot cease to live among representations of the past whatever we think about their truth-value.

Moreover, it is possible to speak about representation and claim cultural importance for the representation of history in fiction without making strong metaphysical claims about the relationship between language and the world, even though it may sound like a paradox. In other words, representations matter, affect us and have ethical implications even if theorists disagree about their relationship to the world.

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[122] Hutcheon 1988, 190-191.

[123] Ibid., 189.

[124] Kalela 2000, 24-25 and passim.

A theoretical point supporting this view is that representation is not to be understood as a synonym for reference. With representation I understand, like Allen Thiher, "the way language and, by extension, literature function through their linguistic structure, a structure that is always displacing the word or the work toward something else." Reference, instead, is "the relationship of that structure to the order of the real."[125] The distinction between these two concepts makes understandable the seemingly paradoxical nature of postmodernist historical fiction. Regardless of the questioning of historical knowledge, postmodernist historical fiction supplies the reader with historical images that strengthen or modify his or her former popular historical picture, whether illusory or "real." Thus it seems undeniable that we are always already under the influence of historical representations regardless of whether we possess a relativist view about historiography. The study of representations of history in postmodernist fiction can tell, if not what history really was, at least what are the contemporary poetical, ideological and moral emphases of those imaginations.

Steven Connor argues further that it is "more interesting and profitable to ask what a novel *does*, intellectually, affectively, imaginatively, politically, with and in history than to ask merely what kind of truthfulness to history it displays or denies."[126] Even though he finds reason to Hutcheon's theory, Connor criticises the idea that the aim of the postmodernist historical novel would simply be the exploration of the limits of historical narration. He argues that there are also other ways in which recent postmodernist fiction "address historical material, are historical and act in history."[127] This view is suggestive of Foucault's views and those of new historicism as it emphasises that a novel is an object in history and a device for constructing and transforming individual and cultural identities.

Another idea supporting the view that the historical relativism of postmodernist fiction does not advocate nihilism is the fact that the conscious refusal of the effort to embrace history in its totality can be considered an ethical action. In

[125] Thiher 1987, 91.

[126] Connor 1996, 132.

[127] Ibid.

postmodern ethics, the effort to represent the world as single and unitary is seen as an "exertion of violence," and as "a denial of the independence of existents."[128] Gibson claims that the postmodern "ethical relation […] is a relation to infinity rather than the thought of totality, and begins precisely as the other in its infinity exceeds my representation of it, in faltering or failing or "ruin" of representation."[129] Consequently, then, the "failure" to represent history in its totality and the self-conscious admission of the limits of historical representation that characterise postmodernist historical fiction can be seen as an ethical appreciation of the alterity and particularity of the past.

Given the above emphases, some common themes or motifs of postmodernist historical novels can now be named. First, the postmodernist historical novel customarily and in many ways introduces and represents otherness, the neglected and forgotten in history. Linda Hutcheon claims that contrary to the aim of the realist historical novel (as defined by Georg Lukács) to represent the typical in history, historiographic metafiction represents the atypical, especially by characterisation. Thus, the postmodernist historical novel succeeds in probing the forgotten, the marginalised. Feminist thematics is one often-recurring instance of this representation of the historically marginalised in postmodernist fiction. Historical marginalisation is, in general, a consequence of the fact that, as Michel Foucault has argued, history is always written from a perspective, from someone's perspective.[130]

Correspondingly, by his term *jarring witnesses* Robert Holton refers to the giving of voice to the silenced in history that takes place both in modernist and

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[128] Gibson 1999, 57. As Andrew Gibson notes in his reading of *Heart of Darkness* (1902), the European experience of alterity has been characterised by an amazement and will to encompass, articulate and master the whole (ibid., 62). According to Gibson, this is clearly seen in F.R. Leavis's denunciation of the novel. Leavis did not appreciate the novel just because it warrants the limits of representation and the power of the unrepresentable. Conrad's novel seems to betray Leavis's idea that "a novel's ethical power is inseparable from a kind of mimetic adequacy ('an art of vivid record')" (ibid., 56).

[129] Ibid., 57.

[130] Foucault 1998, 92-93.

postmodernist historical novels.[131] As an example of postmodernist historical novels, he analyses Thomas Pynchon's *V* (1963), and claims that "[w]hile many critics have discussed the epistemological lems [sic] presented in Pynchon's work, less attention has been paid to the precise setting or context in which Pynchon locates those problems."[132] Holton argues that Pynchon's "radical questioning of power, politics and historical events (as well as philosophy of history) ought to be taken seriously."[133] He maintains that it is quite astonishing that there exists such a blind spot in the criticism of Pynchon's works, thus setting the scene for subsequent analyses of postmodernist historical fictions.

Second, and as a special case of the first, some postmodernist historical novels, like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) or *The Satanic Verses* (1988) present a postcolonial thematics. As Andrew Gibson notes, in anti- or postcolonial works like *The Satanic Verses* "actual history is shadowed by its excluded other, history in the negative, virtual history."[134] *The Satanic Verses* resists the reduction of the plural and multiple history into a singular explanatory frame, whether that of the Islamic Fundamentalism or British nationalism. Indeed, Gibson argues that

> the cruelties and injustices of imperialism and patriarchy and the miseries that have been their consequences may finally be inseparable from Western ontology, from a habit of thought that deems it possible and necessary to speak of and therefore master the other as a whole, to reduce the other to the terms of the same.[135]

Thus, the ethics of the postmodernist historical novel when representing history lies in its respect for the culturally and historically other and multiple.

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[131] Holton 1994, passim.

[132] Ibid., 117.

[133] Ibid., 217-218.

[134] Gibson 1999, 208.

[135] Ibid., 65.

Third, the postmodernist historical novel takes up the postmodern discussion of the self or subject. Novels like Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1991), Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) or Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) have been seen to endorse the postmodern view about the "death of the subject" (Foucault), because of their sceptical view about the role of an individual in historical change.[136] The theme of individuality and historical determination recur, of course, throughout the tradition of historical novels. Indeed, it appears thematised already in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1864-1869).[137]

[136] Roessner 2000.

[137] See below Ch. 3.6.

CHAPTER 3: THE DISTINCTION OF THE POSTMODERNIST HISTORICAL NOVEL: THE CASE OF *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN* AND *A MAGGOT*

> […] I wanted to write about a woman who had been unfairly exiled from society. But I've never liked historical novels and had no desire to write one. It took me some months to accept that this ghostly presence adamantly refused to become contemporary.[138]

> Every writer who seeks a place in the "family tree" of a given genre participates in the dialectics of imitation and rebellion, of affirmation and negation. To accomplish this, the writer must absorb a great deal from the parental figure but must also declare a distinct identity. In many cases this process, in which the new writer establishes an independent self

[138] *FO,* xxx.

> in the generic family of writers, is marked by an *ambivalent* attitude toward the parental family.[139]
>
> Postmodernist writers who consistently avoid the traditional conventions in effect set up new subgenres with new conventions.[140]

In the first of the above citations, Fowles's comment on writing *The French Lieutenant's Woman* indicates that sometimes the author wishes to write within a particular generic framework, even if it does not necessarily agree with his or her sensibility, or does not fit in with his or her literary and ideological endeavour as such. The resulting anxiety seems to lead authors to rework generic conventions so as better to match their intentions or the sensibility of a given culture and its reading public. Of course, the modification of the conventions might also play a part in creating a new kind of readership and a new horizon of expectations, and thus, a new way of thinking and seeing.[141] In any case, as Fishelov argues in the above (second) quotation, this process of genre mutation reveals an ambivalent relation to literary tradition. A particular text always originates within a given genre and partly grows away from it, whether slightly or more radically.

This is also the case with Fowles's postmodernist historical novels; they consciously seek to parody and deform previous generic conventions from within those conventions. Fowles's phrase "ghostly presence" in the above citation refers, first of all, to the genealogy of Sarah Woodruff's figure.[142] However, the phrase could just as well be used to describe the way the novel consciously uses age-old generic and narrative conventions to represent Sarah Woodruff and the Victorian world in general. In other words, the conventions of both Victorian realist fiction and the classical historical novel seem to occupy a ghost-like

[139] Fishelov 1993, 72 (emphasis in the original).

[140] Fowler 1982, 104.

[141] See above Ch. 2.1.2 on Bakhtin's idea about genres as forms of thinking.

[142] *FO*, xxx.

presence in the novel. In that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* reworks and imitates these conventions and combines them with those of the modern novel, so as to form a postmodernist double-coded discourse, the novel can be seen as a postmodernist parody of both Victorian fiction and the historical novel.

This chapter examines the way *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* use and rework the narrative and generic conventions of the historical novel. The aim is to study the distinctively postmodernist innovations within the given generic frame. To this end, I shall examine the aims and constraints of historical representation, characterisation, intertextuality, paratextuality, metafictionality, anachronisms, and finally, the essayistic passages of these two novels.

Thus even if the emphasis is on the poetics dominating these novels and their relationship to a generic tradition, I shall also offer some arguments about the thematic functioning of the poetic solutions in these novels. I shall continue the discussion on the representation of history in postmodernist fiction, begun in Chapter 2.1.2, by considering the more particular aims and effects of historical representation in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. Moreover, the chapter also works partly as a theoretical preparation for the forthcoming chapters as it introduces the theoretical notions behind my particular intertextual interpretations of Fowles's novels.

3.1 The Politics of the Unknown: The Aims of Fowles's Postmodernist Historical Fictions

3.1.1 Autonomy?

The discussion of the autonomy of historical fiction is motivated in this study especially since in the epilogue of *A Maggot* the author-narrator declares that the aim of literature clearly differs from that of historiography:

> I have the greatest respect for exact and scrupulously documented history, not least because part of my life is (in a very humble way) devoted to it; but this exacting discipline is essentially a science, and immensely different in its aims and methods from those of fiction.[143]

This poetic position calls to mind the frequently cited Aristotelian idea about the philosophical nature of literature and the particularity of history. Aristotle's thought about the different goals and significance of history and literature can be seen to manifest itself in those formalist literary theories that claim that fiction is a distinctive, universal and ahistorical category of textuality. For example, Dorrit Cohn proposes that "[f]ictional narrative is unique in its potential for crafting a self-enclosed universe ruled by formal patterns that are ruled out in all other orders of discourse."[144]

From our point of view the most interesting point is that Murray Krieger has applied Aristotle's famous notion about the distinctiveness of poetry to the historical novel as a genre. He argues that all historical elements, be they an incident, a character, an idea, even words and their "normal" meanings, when detached from historical reality, shift in their meaning and ontological status when they become part of a closed teleological pattern of fiction.[145] This notion emphasises the autonomy of all fiction and is aimed at distinguishing between historical narratives and historical fictions. According to this view, historical fiction has distinguishable aims, specific goals of its own that separate it significantly from historical narrative. Indeed, if we follow this thought to its logical conclusion, it would be correct to claim that even historical fiction is more philosophical than historiography, since historical fiction is more universal in its aims than historiography.

Nevertheless, when the role of the reader is taken into account in the defining of genres, the matter becomes complicated. Commenting on Krieger, Joseph W.

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[143] *M*, 455.

[144] Cohn 1999, vii.

[145] Krieger 1974 , 635-636.

Turner claims that it is more appropriate to make a distinction between narrative history and historical fiction with regard to generic conventions rather than between Aristotle's universality and particularity.[146] Consequently, the problem with Krieger's argument for the autonomy of historical fiction becomes apparent when attention is paid to the role of the reader. In Turner's argument, the emphasis is on the readers' expectations. According to Turner, the readers' historical expectations are different within the different kinds of historical fiction. He distinguishes between (1) documented historical novels (that have direct links with recorded history), (2) disguised historical novels (where there are similarities between recorded history and the story of the novel, but no direct references between them) and (3) invented historical novels (where the principal characters and events are all invented). The reader's historical expectations grow in number and kind along the continuum from invented through disguised to documented historical novels.[147]

Though the basic idea of paying attention to the readers' historical and cultural expectations is worthy of note, Turner's categories are artificial and would need further elaboration. For example, Turner does not take account of the fact that even if many realist historical fictions, such as Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*, are based on recorded historical events, they still blend real historical figures with the invented characters. His model ignores the possibility of mixed kinds of historical fiction–at least overtly.

Moreover, Turner is at odds with Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* (1971), because in that novel the author is "threatening the very nature of the generic contract."[148] However, this breaking with conventional expectations and setting up of generic contracts is currently considered more of a convention of postmodernist fiction than a rarity. The revival of the historical novel as a genre in the 1980s and 1990s has shaken up the generic categories so thoroughly that Turner's 1979 classification has lost at least part of its descriptive force.

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[146] Turner 1979, 345.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 348-349.

Interestingly, however, Turner sees the disguised historical fiction as encouraging a retrospective activity on the part of the reader:

> In a situation where anything is possible, reader [sic] expectations tend to be minimal or non-existent; and since the disguise signals the author's privilege to change history in any way he should choose, it becomes rather difficult for the reader to know in advance what will happen. […] Perhaps then, we should posit a certain passivity on the part of readers of disguised historical novels, less an anticipating of the disguise than a waiting to see how it is developed. We might say, in other words, that in conventional examples of this type of historical fiction the reader interprets the referential component of the novel retrospectively.[149]

The idea of retrospection in the interpretation of the novel's referential component seems to conform to the reading process of many postmodernist historical fictions as well. The reason for this seems to be that there are similarities between the categories of disguised historical fiction as Turner defines it and of postmodernist historical novels. Above all, in both categories the referential relation between recorded history and its fictional representation becomes blurred in many ways.

In *A Maggot*, the story about Rebecca Lee refers to recorded history but the story of Rebecca is, nevertheless, invented (thus blurring the category between invented and documented history). It is noteworthy that the real identity of Rebecca remains camouflaged until it is revealed in the epilogue. Thus the consideration of the relationship between the recorded history of Ann Lee and her daughter is in principle a retrospective activity. The novel encourages the reader to make comparisons between fact and fiction in retrospect, even though the history of Rebecca Lee is invented.

This tussle between fact and fiction in the interpretation of *A Maggot* is also a procedure that draws attention to the literary form of the novel. This metafictional

[149] Turner 1979, 346.

characteristic is also an aspect that Turner discusses in relation to disguised historical novels. What interests me in Turner's early account is that he asserts that the disguised historical novel upholds autonomy precisely because of this metafictional aspect:

> […] the awareness of the disguise is focusing the reader's attention on the design of the novel itself. Thus we might say that the disguise points more to the closed teleological pattern of the novel than it does to history. And to this extent, it could be argued, disguised historical fiction maintains a conventional autonomy.[150]

Thus, Turner acknowledges that at least some kind of historical novels have distinguishable aims of their own. Turner's theory is practicable since it enables the differentiation between different kinds of historical novel and their relationship to history and reading (in contrast to Krieger, who offers a theory of historical fiction in general).

Yet the argument needs further elaboration in order to be applicable to Fowles's novels and postmodernist historical fiction as a whole. It is noteworthy that Turner seems to hesitate in his opinion of the autonomy of disguised historical novels. They are, as stated in the above citation, autonomous only to some extent. Indeed, he does not even consider the teleological pattern to completely dominate the disguised historical novel as he uses the term "more" in his estimation. This seems to refer to the idea that the disguised historical novel might still point to some extent to history. In the rest of the chapter, I shall try to estimate the relationship of postmodernist historical fiction to this in-betweenness of history and the claims made for autonomous sphere of fiction.

The digressions from the official history in postmodernist fiction seem to point to the fact that fiction has a different goal than historical narrative. Thus, it seems that the idea about the autonomous character of fiction is justified. Nevertheless, the role of such an alternative version of official history, or *apocryphal history* to

[150] Ibid., 347.

use Brian McHale's term, is complicated.[151] As Dorrit Cohn remarks, alternative histories can be either sociopolitically or aesthetically inspired. In other words, they might require interpretation that deals with them either as ideological strategies or as artistic games.[152] Indeed, even if postmodernist historical fiction flaunts digressions from official history, it might also do this in order to question the ideological basis of particular historiographies. Hence, the term *autonomy* in the sense Aristotle attributes to it is questioned by the fact that postmodernist historical fiction might still at least partly aim at commenting on particular historical narratives and their ideological content. On the other hand, in these fictions, history might also serve other thematic ends that are detached from the critical examination of the represented historical time and place, and thus hold "conventional autonomy."

Defying the theory of autonomy, Fowles's two novels cling to particular historical matters because they conjure up an image of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, their cultural tensions, discursive practices and religious, scientific, artistic and social outlooks. The general disposition here is that Fowles's novels are negative in the sense that they do not match easily "official" historiography but rather they breake with it and rewrite it, sometimes taking considerable liberties. In other words, they look for different, sometimes radical and imaginative ways to look at history and, at the same time, they rub official history up the wrong way.

Lionel Gossman, among others, advances the idea of negativity in art and literature. He emphasises that at least in an era of powerful ideological control literature can retain its purity because of its negativity.[153] Fowles's novels are negative in the sense that they look for different ways to represent the past. The anomalous representation of history is not just turned towards historiography but also towards the literary tradition. This commentary on literary tradition takes at least two forms in the novel, first, intertextuality, and secondly, postmodernist

[151] McHale 1989, 90.

[152] Cohn 1999, 90.

[153] Gossman 1990, 5.

hybridisation of genres, i.e. the radical appropriation of several different generic forms. The relationship between historical representation and intertextuality is discussed in theoretical terms later.[154] As regards the second form, this study as a whole approaches precisely this way of representing history by means of several generic models and their manipulation.

For instance, the study analyses the way Fowles's two novels apply and break the formal and ideological conventions of the detective novel in representing the world. In principle, by breaking the conventions of the detective novel, Fowles's novels show how our picture of history is strongly connected to the ideological views of some genres. In other words, the manipulation of the generic forms in Fowles's novels forces the reader to question the previously held beliefs of history that these forms have been construing since as Mikhail Bakhtin has suggested, genres are forms of thinking.[155] Thus, by radically breaking with generic tradition and by linking several different genres together so as to create something new, they also create new ways of looking to the past, or at least show the limits of the old ones.

History is not just some irrelevant factor but plays a central role in the process of reading and interpretation of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. For instance, the knowledge of the religious and cultural opinions of the Shakers produces a deeper insight into *A Maggot*.[156] As Katherine Tarbox has shown, the principles of the Shakers emerge in many forms in the novel.[157] The novel pays some kind of homage to the Shakers, offering a historical comment on the role of religious dissenters. In this way it brings marginality to the centre of historical discussion and comments also on the values of Enlightenment and Romanticism, as will be shown later.

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[154] See Ch. 3.3.

[155] See Ch. 2.1.2.

[156] For the origins, characteristic ideas and practices of the Shakers and its affinities with other movements of the time, see Gidley and Bowles 1990.

[157] Tarbox 1988, 158-168. See also Salami 1992, 230-37 and passim, and below Ch. 3.6.3.

Yet there is still another critical point to be made about the suggested autonomy of Fowles's fiction. Even if history changes its ontological position when fictionalised in Fowles's novels, his literary works are the products of a larger discursive formation of a certain historical era, and therefore, they are not independent of the other historical discourses. This point has largely been made by the theorists of new historicism who claim that reading fiction in the light of other texts of the period offers deeper insights. Their conception is that texts are historical objects and thus part of history. Hence, despite their problematic relationship with official history, Fowles's postmodernist historical fictions should be considered as part of the discursive practices and the product of the *episteme* of the historical times of their origin. For example, the representation of sexuality in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is informed by the *episteme* of the late 1960s, and the distrust of all historical metanarratives that both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* exemplify is informed by the postmodern condition of the 1980s.[158] We shall return to this point later.

In conclusion, we are able to speak of the conventional autonomy of Fowles's historical fictions only insofar as the term is meant to refer to their way of displacing the historical data to serve other ends than the official historical narratives. Fowles's historical fictions occupy thus only relative autonomy: their representation of history is not inseparable from other cultural representations of history as the reader works through history while reading them. In other words, the novels' programme is to inculcate *ideological and cultural attitudes* towards history and official historiography, precisely because they do something *other* than aim at a plain mimetic, transparent or realistic representation of history. The poetics of mystery of Fowles's historical fiction operates thus as a cognitive *Verfremdungseffekt* that makes the history seem strange but yet interesting and therefore unforgettable.

[158] See Ch. 5.3 and Ch. 7.3.

3.1.2 The Dark Areas Constraint and its Violation

As we saw in the above, postmodernist historical novels like *The Book of Daniel*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or *A Maggot* do not conveniently match Joseph W. Turner's various categories of subgenres of historical novels. A more successful effort to define the distinctive features of postmodernist historical novels has been made by Brian McHale. His point of comparison is the realist or classical historical novel and the constraints that "govern the insertion of historical realemes [i.e. "different repertoires of real-world objects, individuals and properties"]" in the genre and historical period.[159] According to McHale, there are three constraints on the insertion of historical realemes: (1) the dark areas constraint, (2) the constraint on anachronism and (3) the logic and physics constraint. McHale's main argument is that postmodernist historiographic novels seem to brake each of these three contraints, constraints that realistic historical novels honoured.

In the following, I shall concentrate on examining the dark areas constraint as part of the poetics of mystery in Fowles's novels.[160] By the dark areas constraint is meant that the representation of historical persons, events, objects should not be in dispute with the official historical record. In this way, the improvisation with historical matters is left in classical historical novels to the "dark areas" of history, that is to say, to "those aspects about which the 'official' record has nothing to report."[161] Thus, classical historical novels invent events that the historical record does not really rule out, such as the description of the inner life of a historical character or some minor happenings that do not affect the course of official historical narratives.[162]

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[159] McHale 1989, 87.

[160] However, Chapter 3.2 is given over entirely to an examination of the anachronisms of these two novels.

[161] McHale 1989, 87.

[162] McHale 1989, 87. Some historical novels, though, recard the inner life of the characters inaccessible (ibid.).

Most of the descripitions of events and historical settings in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* do not contradict the official history in any strong sense. Yet the fact that Sarah lives in the house of D. G. Rossetti does not satisfy the dark areas constraint completely. Official history rules out such an encounter as even the exact details such as the actual years of the stay are given. Sarah's visit to the Rossetti house is, moreover, considerable in length and thus only plausible in the sense that it is known that the male members of the Brotherhood supported, lived and even married lovers and models like Sarah. If Sarah had stayed only, let us say, a few days in Rossetti's house, it could be argued more convincingly that something of the sort might have happened. Thus, Sarah's long stay in the Rossetti house is ontologically more disturbing than, for example, Jeanie Deans's brief meeting with Queen Caroline in Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*. Still, it is a relatively acceptable improvisation as it imitates the historical model of *PRB*'s protegées and does not radically change anything in the course of known history.

Yet a recent interpretation of the novel's lesbian references points to a detail in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s fictional world that seems offer a more profound challenge to the historical record. David W. Landrum claims that the novel hints at Christina being a lesbian.[163] Thus the novel ambiguously suggests a matter that seems to contradict Christina Rossetti's personal history as recorded in official historical narratives, even if the possibility of her being a lesbian would seem that much more plausible, since she never married. Here we encounter the problem of the nature of the "official" historical record, since some things might seem plausible for the modern reader regardless of the fact that they are not spoken of in historical narratives. These kinds of problemas, thus, encourage speculation about the nature of historical narratives and about their limits and blind spots even though these suggestions are not seriously intended to prove anything. They also reveal that the historical gaze is always already contaminated by the contemporary sexual, ideological, and psychological sensitivities.

[163] Landrum 2000, 61.

The case of *A Maggot* is more complicated. In the composition of the main storyline, the novel utilises, in principle, the dark areas of the biography of a historical character as it portrays the life of Rebecca Lee, the mother of the more famous Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers. Yet an ontological shock results from the fact that the story of Rebecca is completely invented. So, the whole story of Rebecca Lee argues against the dark areas constraint as the novel's improvisation is not probable in any sense.

The reader experiences a double *anagnorisis*, a twofold transition from ignorance to knowledge, at the end of the novel. The narrator reveals not only that the novel has told the story of the mother of a famous historical person but also that the story is completely invented and does not respect documented history, neither the biography of Rebecca or Ann Lee (her birth date is not correct). In other words, the novel openly acknowledges that it uses historical characters and settings unconventionally. However, the nature of the epilogue is paradoxical as it on the one hand makes openly known the way the novel abuses the dark areas constraint and on the other gives detailed facts and comments of the history on Ann Lee and the Shakers. Thus, the epilogue both reveals the artificiality of the novel's representation of history and connects the story to the official record of the past.

Readers' attitudes towards these kinds of deviations from the official historical record seem to vary according to their values and sensitivities, being subjective or, at least, culturally conditioned. Thus, Dorrit Cohn tells us that she was annoyed about the way Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* (1992) makes the desert explorer Laszlo Almasy an innocent victim of the German Army, even though he was an opportunistic Nazi collaborator in real life. By contrast, she did not cease to appreciate Coetzee's *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) when she noticed that its representation of the life of Dostoyevsky's stepson, Pavel, radically differs from official history.[164] But as speculations about

[164] Cohn 1999, 159.

what kind of reader would get irritated by reading Fowles's novels would be frivolous, I shall not pursue the matter here.[165]

The point here is that the problematic historical references make the reading of *A Maggot*, as well as the other novels in the genre, qualitatively different from the reading of a text that belongs to a different genre.[166] Thus, these kinds of deviations from the official historical record are genre-specific markers that reveal the difference between postmodernist and classical historical novels. These problematic historical references also seem to point to the breaches of official history, and consequently, they seem to reveal the limits of historical knowledge and the hidden ideological agendas of authoritative historiography. For instance, Christina Rossetti's homosexuality exemplifies the problematic representation of history in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, since it hints at a possible breach in official biography. The problematic use of dark areas of history in fictional narratives might also function as part of the thematics of the novel, in much the same way as, for example, the marvellous experience of Rebecca Lee is linked to the thematics of existential freedom. It might also serve to increase the reader's awareness of the hidden problems, both epistemological and ethical, of the realistic improvisation and thus reveal the entire artificiality of the dark areas constraint on classical historical novels. In other words, their explicitness prepares the reader to recognise the artificiality of the improvisation in the dark areas of history in other historical narratives as well. In sum, the problematic completion of dark areas of history in Fowles's fiction works as a metafictional device aimed at subverting efforts to hide indeterminacies and ideological agendas in both official historical writing and classical historical fictions.

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[165] The reference to Christina Rossetti's lesbianism might certainly annoy some conservative readers. Similarly, some religious enthusiast might accuse *A Maggot* of sacrilege, as it offers quite a unique representation of religious matters, and is without a clear commitment to Christian values.

[166] Cf. Cohn 1999, 159.

3.1.3 Facing the Unforgettable: The Ethics of Characterisation

> The pathos of love consists, to the contrary, in an insurmountable duality of beings; it is a relationship with what forever slips away. The relationship does not *ipso facto* neutralize alterity, but conserves it. [...] The other as other here is not an object which becomes ours or which becomes us, to the contrary, it withdraws into its mystery.[167]

As was previously argued, it is most notable in the British postmodernist historical novel that the representational potential is peculiarly strong and the mimetic function of the language is not questioned outright.[168] As regards the representation of the characters in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Aleid Fokkema notes the following:

> The novels of John Fowles […] do not really question representation—*The French Lieutenant's Woman* is confident in its portrayal of all characters, except Sarah Woodruff. But even this character is not anti-representational, nor a subject of language: she is only incoherent, as the perspective changes and versions of her character alternate.[169]

Although I do not completely agree with this suggestion that Fowles's novels would not question historical representation (in fact, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* does so overtly, even if to a degree, as will be shown in Ch. 3.5), it is quite evident that both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* make clear historical claims by means of vivid characterisation.

Sarah Woodruff is different from the other characters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* because she is epistemologically incoherent, being described

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[167] Levinas 1985, 67.

[168] See above Ch. 2.2.

[169] Fokkema 1991, 141.

only through the focalizations and descriptions of the other characters, and because the narrator does not have access to her inner thoughts. And so she remains an enigmatic figure, which is a part of the poetics of mystery and the theme of indeterminacy of the novel. At issue here is the interpretative scheme that the author should give their characters their freedom.[170] The resistance of Sarah's character to every description, whether expressed in a euphemistic manner ("the French lieutenant's woman"), scientific terminology or lovers' jargon, can be interpreted in ethical terms as a denial of the Western obsession to possess the other completely.

It is thus possible to interpret Sarah's resistance to all kinds of representations as a symbolic respect for the diversity of the other. This principle of respect is put forward by Gibson as follows:

> An ethical priority emerges, not as my knowledge dominates the other, but as the moral height of the other dominates me and all the terms–being, essence, identity, principle, the same–in which I would seek to encompass her or him.[171]

The novel shows that every effort to exhaustively account for Sarah in scientific or Romantic terms is prone to irony. The thematic and ethical aim of the novel is thus not to claim idealistically that complete freedom from external power is possible, as many recent critics of the novel seem to suppose (and in so doing further suppose that the novel is doomed to fail in this)[172] but rather to modestly emphasise the ethical dangers of trying to possess the other in his or her totality and "moral height" with any description or representation. Being the other to the very end of the novel, not giving up to the psychological analyses of Dr Grogan (or the reader) or to the Romantic Victorian narrative Charles (or, again, the reader) tries to impose on her, Sarah remains free from every effort to define her

[170] See *FLW*, Ch. 13.

[171] Gibson 1999, 57.

[172] See e.g. Cooper 1991, 103-142.

diversity and difference, even if she is still under the contingent historical pressures of her time.

Finally, some attention should be paid to the importance Fowles's historical fictions give to face and look. It is in fact Sarah Woodruff's face and look that starts the main plot of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Charles's quest for new identity. According to the narrator, Sarah has "an unforgettable face," and afterwards Charles thinks of her look as a lance.[173] There is certainly much that is sexual in this first encounter between Charles and Sarah, but the most important aspect of it is that Sarah's look deconstructs Victorianism.[174] Sarah's look belongs rather to the next century, that is, her look is anachronistic–even if the contemporaries are not able to recognise the (post)modernity of her appearance.[175] The novel's emphasis on the importance of the face brings to mind the significance of the face in Levinas's ethics.[176] The novel's thematic emphasis lies ultimately on the recognition that it is ethical to acknowledge that any description of a face is inadequate and that it is the acceptance of this indeterminacy that is the most ethical act: it marks the renunciation of the effort to possess the other completely through any act of knowledge or narration. As in Levinas's ethics, the novel proposes that, as an ethical act, desire (*désir*, not *besoin*) for the other maintains the other's otherness.

Similarly, the face is an important motif in *A Maggot*. While staring at Rebecca, Mr Bartholomew asks Rebecca not to forget him, and Mr Ayscough sarcastically notes that he certainly shall not forget her.[177] Mr Ayscough's sarcastic words, however, turn finally ironically against him. The novel thematically emphasises the importance of not trying to possess and explain the other. Mr Ayscough's main effort is already *ex officio* to define in rational terms what has happened and

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[173] *FLW*, 13.

[174] Cf. Neary 1992, 169. Neary gives a good account of the relationship between the destructiveness of Sarah and sexuality in the novel.

[175] Cf. *FLW*, 157.

[176] See Levinas 1961 and 1985, 85-92.

[177] *M*, 383. See below Ch. 6.1.

to explain the role of every individual in the happenings. By making an effort to determine the personality of Rebecca and, moreover, to show her place in society Mr Ayscough is attempting to find a way to forget her, to restore the *status quo*. Yet like Sarah Woodruff, Rebecca is capable of resisting every effort to define her identity, radical otherness and mysteriousness, and in this way she remains an unforgettable figure.

I shall return to discuss both Rebecca and Sarah as indeterminable characters in Chapters 5 and 7.3.

3.2 Postmodernist Anachronism: From Necessity to Flaunting

The aim of the realist aesthetics was to positively solve the problems textual anachronisms caused for the genuine representation of historical truth. For this purpose, it was suggested that the use of anachronistic language and narration is indispensable for conveying the sentiment of a particular historical period. This idea is clearly expressed in the often-cited "Dedicatory Epistle" to Scott's *Ivanhoe*:

> It is true that I neither can nor do pretend to the observation of complete accuracy, even in matters of outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners. But the same motive which prevents my writing the dialogue of the piece in Anglo-Saxon or in Norman French, and which prohibits my sending forth to the public this essay printed with the types of Caxton or Wynken de Worde, prevents my attempting to confine myself within the limits of the period in which my story is laid. It is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners, as well as the language, of the age we live in […].

> It is true that this licence is confined […] within legitimate bounds […] the author […] must introduce nothing inconsistent with the manners of the age […].[178]

Whatever the truth or untruth of Scott's notion, it should be noted that these remarks on the inevitability of anachronism for mediating the past operate as a vehicle for consolidating the reader's belief in the possibility of authentic historical representation. Therefore, the preface to *Ivanhoe* acts as an essential part of the novel's realist textual strategy and is aimed at eliminating doubts about the accuracy of the novel's historical narration.

The approval of certain anachronistic properties of historical narration also finds expression in Georg Lukács's realist theory of the historical novel. Lukács develops Hegel's idea of necessary anachronism and applies it to his analysis of Scott's novels. According to Lukács's reading of Hegel, the historical novel should represent the past as the prehistory of the present. That is, the historical novel ought to clarify and underline the relationship between past and present. If it succeeds in objectively representing the present as the product of the past, it necessarily emphasises those tendencies in history that have led up to the present situation, tendencies whose later significance contemporaries could not understand. Allowing the characters to represent feelings and thoughts about historical relationships more lucidly than the people of the time could have done does not, however, result in historical and social incorrectness. Erroneous modernisation of historical subject matter occurs only if the living connection between past and present is lacking or if it is artificially created. Most importantly, in the best historical novels the use of anachronistic representation is limited to what is necessary for elucidating this connection.[179] In Lukács theory of the historical novel, then, the representation of historical necessity

[178] *I*, 526-530.

[179] Lukács 1989, 59-63.

compensates for the anachronistic gaze and for the use of developed language and forms of expression.[180]

In his hermeneutic theory of "the other historical novel" from the late 1960s, Hans Vilmar Geppert abandons the relationship between anachronism and objective historical representation as a starting point and prefers to concentrate on the different functions that anachronisms play in historical narration. For Geppert, anachronism is a radical form of *Zeitpotenzierung*, raising the power of historical narration, as it makes the distance between past and present alive and active. According to Geppert, anachronisms do not, in principle, result in an amalgam of time periods. Instead, they result in the provocation of distance: they reveal history, i.e. the given fictive present as relative and distant. Somewhat paradoxically, he also asserts that anachronisms bring the represented history closer to its contemporary audience. This argument resembles Scott's claim that history becomes understandable for the modern reader only when translated into contemporary language. Nevertheless, as Geppert's examples of anachronisms[181] show, he is probably indicating that anachronisms represent history in a way calculated to reflect contemporary moral, political and cultural issues. Moreover, Geppert's examples of anachronisms, chosen from the works of German modernist authors, are at odds with the principles of realist aesthetics. They show that modernist historical fiction, still mainly grounded on the relics of realist aesthetics, occasionally exceeds the accepted limits of realist historical representation. Geppert's claim that anachronisms make the reader think

[180] It is noteworthy, as Lukács shows, that Hegel and his contemporaries Scott and Goethe were entirely aware that the development of language and culture necessitates a change in the expression and form of historical subject matter. Goethe, in his discussion of Manzoni's play *Adelchi*, asserts that writers necessarily lend a modern spirit to the conditions of the past. Nevertheless, Lukács argues that Hegel's notion of the relationship of present to past is more consciously historical than Goethe's. Above all, Lukács appreciates Scott's sensitive use of necessary anachronism (Lukács 1989, 60-62).

[181] Such as "Dieser König wird gegrüßt mit der erhobenen Hand" from Heinrich Mann's *Die Jugend des Königs Henri Quatre* (1935) or "Herrenrasse" and "geliebter Führer" from Arno Schmidt's *Alexander oder Was ist Warheit* (1953).

historically and reveal history as a construct seems to anticipate Linda Hutcheon's theory of self-conscious historical narration, i.e. the theory of historiographic metafiction.[182]

According to McHale's theory of contemporary literature, postmodernist historical fiction flaunts anachronisms. In other words, postmodernist fiction consciously disregards the anachronism constraint, the third constraint on realist historical fiction.[183] McHale notes, though, that anachronisms in material culture are rare even in postmodernist fiction. His counterexample is Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada* (1977), where not only does a character pick up a telephone in the presence of President Abraham Lincoln but Lincoln's assassination is even televised. The anachronisms in world-view and ideology are more typical in postmodernist fiction. McHale's examples of this type are John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factory* (1967), where Henry Burlingame "is equipped with a full complement of late-twentieth-century intellectual attitudes and opinions" and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where "Fowles's narrator attributes to Sarah […] the attitudes and psychology of a modern, that is, late-twentieth-century woman."[184] As another form of self-flaunting anachronism, McHale mentions the allusions to various contemporary referents in a historical context. His example is, again, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and its various twentieth-century referents, like the comparison of the Cobb at Lyme to a Henry Moore sculpture.[185] Another useful contribution to the poetics of anachronism is McHale's distinction between "innocent" anachronisms that do not penetrate the fictional world, i.e. the diegetic

[182] Geppert 1976, 120-122.

[183] See above 3.1.2.

[184] McHale 1989, 88, 93.

[185] In fact, the narrator of *FLW* does not compare the Cobb of Lyme Regis only to the "subtle curves" of Moore's sculpture but also to those of Michelangelo's works. Yet this latter comparison is, in principle, to be regarded as anachronistic too, as the Cobb dates from the thirteenth century (it is first mentioned in 1294) and Michelangelo lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Still the latter comparison does not have a similar effect of being as anachronistic as the first one, as both Michelangelo's sculptures and the Cobb represent something that is ancient and distant.

narrative level, and the more prominent ones that allow the characters to share some of the benefits of their narrator's hindsight. For instance, the comparison of the Cobb to Moore's sculpture is justified even according to realist poetics, but letting one character of Barth's *Letters* (1979) predict the ultimate American withdrawal from South Vietnam several years before it really happened breaks with realist conventions. Both innocent and prominent anachronisms foreground the temporal distance between the act of narration and the objects narrated.

As we have seen, the attitude towards anachronistic narration has shifted from the nineteenth-century acceptance of its necessity to a contemporary interest in exploring its poetic possibilities. Still, some additional remarks on the current theory of postmodernist anachronism are needed. First of all, there are poetic phenomena such as the ones I shall here call *anachronistic genre pattern* and *integrative anachronistic narration* that has not, as far as I know, been taken up in postmodernist poetics. I shall describe the first type later, in a separate subchapter, as it is the type of anachronism that characterises the generic form and narration of *A Maggot*. Hence, I will start by briefly defining the latter concept.

Integrative anachronistic narration can be considered as a subcategory of anachronisms in material culture. Consequently, integrative anachronistic narration is narration with high incidence of material anachronisms. Christoph Ransmayr's *Die letzte Welt* (1988) offers an example of this. The novel obscures not only the line between fiction and fact but, as it exploits the integrative anachronistic narration, also the line between past and present. *Die letzte Welt* is a postmodernist novel about a young poet called Cotta, who travels to Tomi, the city of iron, in order to find the famous poet Naso, i.e. Ovid. The introduction of Naso's character lays bare the way anachronisms result in mingling antiquity and the nineteenth century in the novel:

> Naso… Das war doch der Liliputaner, der im August in einem Planwagen in die Stadt kam und nach Einbruch der Dunkelheit über die weiße Rückwand des Schlachthauses Liebesfilme dröhnen ließ. Zwischen den

> Vorstellungen verkaufte er Emailgeschirr, blutstillenden Alaunstein und türkischen Honig, und zur Musik aus seinen Lautsprechern heulten Hunde.[186]

Even if the characters are historical, frequent appearance of this kind of material anachronism in the novel's narration obscures the understanding of the portrayed moment in history: do the events take place in the ancient world, in the nineteenth century, or in some unknown future? There is no accurate answer to this question, since the chosen narrative strategy emphasises the indeterminable, double-layered nature of the time depicted. In this novel, then, the integrative anachronistic narration results in limiting the possibility to determine the historical period in which the events take place and in divorcing the narration from the depiction of official history. Thus, Ransmayr's text shows that postmodernist literature does not refrain from using even the most potent forms of anachronistic narration.

Another point that needs attention is the fact that postmodernist narrative theory has mainly concentrated on examining the other basic form of misdating, namely *prochronism*. In brief, prochronism is an anachronism that represents an event, thought or way of behaving as, chronologically speaking, older than it really is.[187] Its opposite, *parachronism*, is an anachronism that depicts an old event, thought or way of behaving as chronologically younger than it is. A parachronism is also at issue when a person, an idea or a custom is regarded as old-fashioned or no longer appropriate.[188]

It seems that the reason why parachronisms have not received much attention, either theoretical or practical, is that postmodernist fiction has not exploited this type of anachronism as it has prochronisms. Nevertheless, Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton*, a postmodernist historical fiction that intertwines three centuries,

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[186] *LW*, 12.

[187] *OED* defines prochronism as "[t]he referring of an event, etc., to an earlier date than the true one. A particular case of ANACHRONISM […]."

[188] *OED* defines parachronism as "[a]n error in chronology; usually taken as one in which an event, etc., is referred to a later date than the true one."

gives an example of this other type as its protagonist, Charles Wychwood, acts and thinks as if he were a Romantic poet, even though he lives in the twentieth-century England. Naturally, the depiction of Wychwood conforms to the principles of realism when it is ironically revealed that people tend to act according to old-fashioned thoughts. In addition, the novel thematises this parachronism of behaviour as it concentrates on exploring the impacts of history and tradition on contemporary life, thought and literature.[189]

3.2.1 Excessive Anachronism

Even if postmodernist anachronistic narration disengages from the principles of realism, it cannot completely detach itself from the realistic notion of history. The reason for this is that anachronism is a relational concept. That is, anachronism exists only in relation to official historiography, to a realist framework. In other words, anachronism becomes visible only if there is an intersubjectively (institutionally) accepted notion of a specific historical period and its discursive practices, if history is valorized. For example, even if the integrative anachronistic narration radically breaks with the depiction of "official" history in *Die letzte Welt*, the names of the places (Rome, Tomi, The Black Sea) and protagonists (Naso, Augustus, Cotta) invoke the reader's encyclopaedic knowledge of the life of Ovid, and anachronisms are thus weighed against this knowledge. Another point of contact with a realist framework is that the anachronisms of postmodernist literature are often realistically motivated, that is, they do not seriously disturb the invoked reality effect. Yet, as will be shown in the following analysis of the anachronisms of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, realistic motivation does not mean that the anachronisms of this type would conform to realist aesthetics in every possible way.

[189] For further discussion on the subject, see below Ch. 6.5.2. Cf. Nünning 1997, 225-226.

Regardless of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s poetic inventiveness, anachronisms seem to be realistically motivated in the novel. McHale claims that the narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is justified in making allusions to twentieth-century referents in a nineteenth-century context.[190] Indeed, the use of anachronistic allusions in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* does not violate the material constraint on historical fiction. In fact, this kind of allusion fulfils Walter Scott's original premise that the subject should be translated into contemporary manners and language.[191] Thus, the comparison of the Cobb to Moore's sculpture can be considered as a special case of a translation of historical subject matter into modern language, i.e. as an effort to make history familiar for the supposed readers of the novel, even if, paradoxically, it reveals history as distant, and as a construct.

Moreover, McHale states that in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* "the projection of a 1960s mentality back into the 1860s is realistically motivated […]."[192] According to McHale, Sarah's late-twentieth-century attitudes and psychology are not anachronistic, since Sarah "represents the first glimmerings of modern sensibility in Victorian culture, the historical opening wedge of modernity; she is not anachronistic, but, so to speak, progressive."[193] It is apparent that Fowles's use of anachronism in the novel finds its justification from realist aesthetics: as a messenger of modern sensibility, Sarah is a perfect example of a character who represents the prehistory of the present. Indeed, as a study of existentialist sensitivity *The French Lieutenant's Woman* can be considered as satisfying the realist constraint on anachronism.

The passage that portrays Charles coming across the sleeping Sarah in the woods offers another example of a realistically motivated anachronism. The narrator describes the moment in question as erotic and existential, thus referring to modern psychology and existentialist philosophy, but at one and the same time

[190] McHale 1989, 93-94.

[191] See above Ch. 3.2.

[192] McHale 1989, 93.

[193] Ibid.

emphasises that Charles, a genuine Victorian, did not understand what was going on inside him: "So Charles was inexplicable for himself."[194] Since Victorian psychology could not deal with mixed dispositions, Charles is confused in the face of his reaction towards Sarah's paradoxical character, which is both wild and innocent. In claiming that Charles was experiencing an existential moment without realising it, the narrator gives an anachronistic explanation of Charles's mode of thought and, moreover, of the general mentality of Victorian times. This does not, however, disturb the realistic constraint on historical fiction. As we have seen, it is already disclosed in Lukács's theory that a historical perspective enables a point of view on a particular historical occasion that was not possible for the people of the time. This realist narrative principle is put to use in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s description of Charles's mentality in order to highlight the restricted psychological theories of the Victorian times. In other words, the narrator's comments can be read as a critical claim about the mentality of the whole cultural period and of the backwardness of its psychological theories.

Moreover, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s narrator attempts to show that the contemporary notion of Victorian culture is often distorted: "The prudish puritanity we lend to the Victorians, and rather lazily apply to all classes of Victorian society, is in fact a middle-class view of the middle-class ethos."[195] Hence, the narrator would lose his reliability if his narration were to contradict this intention. It is noteworthy that the narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* never openly shows uncertainty about the past regardless of the reference to the deficiencies of memory in Chapter 35.

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[194] *FLW*, 215. Fowles has openly declared his debt and explained his relation to existentialism and existentialists like Camus and Sartre in several interviews, see e.g. Newquist 1964 and Barnum 1985. Consequently, several monographs and articles approach Fowles's fiction as existentialist literature, see e.g. Rackham 1972, Palmer 1974, Wolfe 1976, Olshen 1978 and Borch and Mikkelsen 1983.

[195] *FLW*, 234.

In its portrayal of this existentialist situation *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is following the same strategy as elsewhere in Fowles's fiction. Consequently, *A Maggot* analyses the same existentialist sensitivity in the character of Mr Bartholomew and in the religious feeling of Rebecca, thus pointing to a more anachronistic representation of history. Nevertheless, *A Maggot* also tries to reveal the existentialist nature of authentic religious feeling, and thus balances the anachronistic existentialist *Weltanschauung* at least to a degree. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* this balancing comes more naturally as there are historical reasons arguing for the possible existentialist experiences of the characters: we should remember that Kierkegaard lived as early as 1813-1855.

One of the anachronisms of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is of a special kind, namely the depiction of Charles's and Sarah's lovemaking. The lovemaking scene openly stages things that were only euphemistically hinted at in the nineteenth-century realist novel, the form of fiction that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a pastiche and parody of. The passage can be considered anachronistic since modern erotic discourse is used in the artificially created context of the nineteenth-century realist fiction. The vocabulary and expressions are such that they strip Victorian sentimentality from the depiction of the affair, e.g., "his member stood erect," "to ejaculate at once," and even the ironic "precisely ninety seconds had passed since he had left her to look into the bedroom."[196] The revelation of intimate sexual details becomes emphasised in contrast to the strongly felt presence of official Victorian fiction and its tight moral norms of literary representation. Therefore, by taking the liberty of depicting sexual intercourse, a thing not permitted in the "respectable" novels of the time, the scene provocatively reveals the restrictions of the public Victorian mode of writing. Still, if the discursive practice and its norms are modern, the depiction of the material level remains realistic.

It is important to point out, though, that even if the anachronisms of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are realistically motivated, they are not in accordance with

[196] *FLW*, 304.

the principles of realist aesthetics. At least they are evidently at odds with Georg Lukács's notion that in the best historical novels the use of anachronistic representation is limited to what is necessary for explaining the connection between past and present.[197] For example, the following anachronistic description of Charles's feelings subsequent to the sexual encounter can hardly be seen as necessary in any sense:

> Charles–no gentle postcoital sadness for him, but an immediate and universal horror–was like a city struck out of a quiet sky by an atom bomb. All lay razed; […] but already the radio-activity of guilt crept, crept through his nerves and veins.[198]

Charles's feeling of guilt would certainly be understandable for the reader without the forcible comparison. Thus, the postmodernity of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s anachronistic narration is founded on the flaunting of anachronistic comparisons, referents and narration that surpasses the limits of necessity. The anachronisms of the novel are not only realistically motivated but also superfluous and playful. By thus foregrounding the historical distance between the observer and the past, the novel reveals the artificiality and historical relativity of any attempt to make historical representation transparent by means of anachronistic language.

3.2.2 At the Roots of Enlightened Detection: Anachronistic Genre Pattern and its Functions

The double coding of discourses in postmodernist fiction has various consequences. An example of this is that the genre combination of a historical narrative (novel, story) and a young genre, for instance, the detective story or

[197] Lukács 1989, 59-63.

[198] *FLW*, 305.

espionage fiction, occasionally produces an anachronistic effect. When this happens, we are dealing with a poetic phenomenon that I shall call an *anachronistic genre pattern*.

The Name of the Rose is a famous example of this narrative method of coupling anachronistically two disparate genres: it is both a historical novel with a medieval subject matter and a classical detective story. Liisa Saariluoma argues, following and further developing Eco's own argument, that the use of the detective pattern is only "a citation" in the novel, a component independent of the historical substance and a freely chosen construction.[199] Thus, the novel does not even strive to hide the anachronistic nature of its various references to classical detective fiction. In other words, it does not even aim at creating an organic connection between history and the anachronistic narrative pattern.[200]

Let us now take a look at the intertwining of both sf and the classical detective story with the historical novel in *A Maggot*. The sf formula is, to start with this generic aspect, a co-product of the novel's narrative technique of intimation and the reader's historical distance from the eighteenth-century world. Compared to the novel's characters' possible understanding of the mysterious events (except Mr Ayscough's possible knowledge of the real nature of the events), the reader easily arrives at a divergent interpretation. The novel makes it possible to interpret some aspects of the historical world according to the reader's previous

[199] Saariluoma 1986, 264-265.

[200] The mixing of genres of postmodernist fiction does not, though, always result in as strongly anachronistic effect and detachment of the plot and historical past as in *Il nome della Rosa*. In Eco's later novel *L'isola del giorno prima* (1994), in which the events take place during the Thirty Years War, the use of modern espionage pattern seems realistically motivated, for spying is known to have taken place throughout history. Moreover, the espionage motif remains within the limits of credibility, for the novel avoids displaying modern features of spying. Thus, even when the spy fiction pattern dates from a later period of history than the subject of the novel, it is an organic part of the novel's portrayal of the historical past, and at least partly justified in realistic terms. It is rather some imaginative and fantastic features of the handling of the spy motif, like the effect of the powder of sympathy on the wounded dog in the ship's hold, that distinguishes Eco's novel sharply from realist aesthetics.

experience of the sf genre, i.e. in accordance with an intertextual framework that the historical characters have no idea of. Consequently, passages like the following can be read in agreement with sf's generic frame:

> [a] […] for his strangest features are his eyes, that are of a vacant blue, almost as if he were blind, though it is clear he is not. They add greatly to the impression of inscrutability, for they betray no sign of emotion, seem always to stare, to suggest their owner is somewhere else. So might *twin camera lenses* see, not normal human eyes.[201]

> [b] From time to time there came also a sound that crept to my ears from the cavern's mouth, which was much like to a swarm of bees, now seeming close, now so faint it might be gone. Yet I saw not a honey-bee where I lay, none but bumbards, and they but few, nor were there flowers to suck save small poor things.[202]

The comparison of a character's eyes to camera lenses in the extract [a] can be read as a realistically motivated anachronistic comparison *but also* (whether the later happenings corroborate this interpretation or not) as an early hint that the character in question might be a humanoid or an android. There is another accidental allusion later to his alien origin in the deposition of David Jones:

> Q. [Was Dick] A melancholy fellow?
> A. Simple, sir. As if he had dropped from the moon. He was more figure of wood than human flesh.[203]

Gian Balsamo has paid attention to the android-like character of Dick. He remarks that

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[201] *M*, 11 (my italics).

[202] *M*, 228-229.

[203] *M*, 203.

> his [Dick's] android-like attitude and aspect will raise a disquieting doubt in the reader's mind; here is the quasi- or nonhuman image of a creature whose intellect and whose emotions elude the plan of reality to which our appraisal of human deeds usually applies.[204]

The extract [b] is an even better example, as it shows how easily the representation of the historical world can be bent to modern interpretation: one can alternatively interpret the buzz of the bees as a voice of a spaceship or a time-machine. Other similar passages give support to this assumption, though they do not corroborate it.

Let us now turn to the detective story pattern of *A Maggot*. Narratives that set a detective story in the past, like *A Maggot* and *The Name of the Rose*, have predecessors in the classical and modernist tradition of detective stories. Panek has argued that at least from the 1940s onwards, possibly even earlier, a sub-group of detective stories have been of acute interest in historical representation.[205]

Yet it is somewhat misleading to name this group or subgenre anachronistic detective fiction, as Panek does.[206] As I see it, a detective story is not

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[204] Balsamo 1991, 129.

[205] Panek claims that Conan Doyle's late stories set in the 1890s, Lillian de Torre's *Dr. Sam—Johnson, Detector* (1946), Margaret Ann Doody's *Aristotle, Detective* (1978), Robert van Gulik's stories about ancient China, all belong to this type (Panek 1987, 193-194). Also some of Ellen Peters's stories can be classified in this category. According to Heta Pyrhönen, Keith Oatley's *The Case of Emily V* (1993) and Caleb Carr's *The Alienist* (1994) are good illustrations of the more recent *historiographical detection*. She also mentions another variant of the sub-genre that "reopens an unsolved historical (or pseudohistorical) mystery, demonstrating how a detective puts together a new solution in the light of various textual documents." Her examples of this type are Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* (1951), Colin Dexter's *The Wench is Dead* (1989), and Veronica Ross's *The Anastasia Connection* (1996) (Pyrhönen 1999, 269, n13).

[206]Panek labels all historical detective stories anachronistic, and consequently makes no distinction between the stories that take place in the nineteenth century and those that describe the more remote past. So, he includes Peter Lovesey's texts about the Victorian policeman

substantially anachronistic only because it is historical; at least there are degrees in the use of anachronisms in historical representation, as we have seen already in Chapter 3.2.1. In principle, to set a detective story in the nineteenth century is less anachronistic–and perhaps anachronistic only in the sense that all historical narratives are necessarily anachronistic since mediated–than to set it in an even more remote past, since the police force, enlightened police procedure and the detective-story formula existed in the nineteenth century, but not prior to that. Naturally, a detective story set in the nineteenth century can also be anachronistic in a more straightforward way if it includes modern details or story elements etc.

When estimating whether the detective pattern of *A Maggot* is anachronistic, it is worthwhile to compare the novel with the early works of crime fiction. This is vital for estimating whether the modernisation of the subject matter takes place in this case, and if so, what it is based on. Of particular interest is that Fowles's novel resembles William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) in subject matter, spirit, and narrative method.[207] According to Symons, the characteristic spirit of crime fiction is first realised in Godwin's novel.[208] Eriksson reveals the main ideological kinship between the texts mentioned as follows:

> Common to both novels is a revolutionary spirit and a craving for justice and equality in the face of the power of the high gentry in eighteenth-century England. [209]

Nevertheless, the ideological relationship between these two novels is not completely revealed without a look at the historical context of Godwin's novel. A

Sergeant Cribb and Conan Doyle's late stories set in the 1890s to his list of anachronistic detective stories (Panek 1987, 193-194). If we follow this logic, Michael Dibdin's parodic *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* (1978) as well as the more conventional Sherlock Holmes pastiches–which are legion–should be categorised as anachronistic.

[207] Cf. Eriksson 1995, 209.

[208] Symons 1985, 33.

[209] Eriksson 1995, 209.

year before *Caleb Williams* Godwin published a work entitled *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice* (1793) that attacked almost all the state institutions, including the judicial system. As Symons notes, many people supported this view at the dawn of the French revolution, and Godwin became the intellectual leader of English radicals for a while.[210] *Caleb Williams* represents a similarly Romantic political aim, as it shows that the judicial system itself is corrupt and that the laws are essentially bad and composed in order to subjugate people by authority. *A Maggot* re-represents the Romantic revolutionary spirit of both *Political Justice* and *Caleb Willams* as it suggests that the representative of law, Mr Ayscough, is morally suspicious. The irony directed towards his behaviour questions his belief in the social status quo of the times, the inequality of people, and the essential difference between man and woman.

Hence, the generic anachronism of *A Maggot* is the product of situating a somewhat similar subject matter to the one in the supposedly first novel of the modern crime fiction genre to an even earlier moment in history, half a century before the publication of *Caleb Williams*. As Symons remarks, the published novels in the first half of the eighteenth century with crime as a subject matter, such as Fielding's *The Life of Mr Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) or *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), were picaresque novels. In the second half of the century, crimes were dealt with in Romantic horror stories, such as Ann Radcliff's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).[211] So, *A Maggot*, a crime novel rewriting the Romantic style and spirit of *Caleb Williams* to a degree, appears prochronistic in its use of the crime-fiction genre. However, the narrative form of the Romantic crime novel serves its purpose very well, since *A Maggot* portrays Rebecca Lee as the harbinger of Romanticism and its revolutionary spirit. The use of this generic anachronism emphasises cleverly the Romantic thematics of the novel.

[210] Symons 1985, 35.

[211] Symons 1985, 28.

Let us now consider one special detail of the novel, the chemical analysis of the residues of combustion that can easily be regarded as a misdated act.[212] The collection of empirical material and their scientific analysis is a conventional act in classical and modernist detective stories, but it was not a common part of a criminal investigation at the beginning of the eighteenth century. So it seems to be a misdated procedure in Fowles's novel.

However, the motif of the chemical analysis of evidence is less anachronistic than it seems at first glance. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the scientific analysis of collected evidence was not a technically impossible operation at the time. Second and more importantly, as the events of the novel are situated at the advent of evidentiary hearing, the method Ayscough is using in solving the crime is not seriously anachronistic. Around the middle of the eighteenth century Western legal praxis started to shift from the method of hearing the eyewitnesses, torture and confession (*regina probationis*) to trial by evidence.[213] As *A Maggot* gives an early, fictitious example of the use of empirical evidence in solving a crime, it can be seen to portray the first signs of the historical transition from one legal usage to another.

Consequently, the novel might be seen to depict the very moment in the Western sociojuridical evolution that finally caused the inauguration of detective fiction as a genre. As Thompson notes, Enlightenment societies and their development of evidentiary trials made possible the birth of detective fiction. Detective fiction seems to assume "the existence of societies at least nominally guided by Enlightenment values and judicial procedures."[214] *A Maggot* describes the arrival of the ideas and values of the Enlightenment to England and their early application in legal praxis. Accordingly, it illustrates the striving for enlightened and empirical juridical procedures at a time when the values of the Enlightenment were not yet predominant in the society.

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[212] See *M*, 287-288.

[213] Thompson 1993, 2-3.

[214] Ibid., 3.

The novel is, hence, like a detective story in its initial stage. It searches the remotest point of history for enlightened detection, a point prior to the use of the detective-story formula in historical fiction is impossible without an even stronger anachronistic effect.

Even though the method of solving the crime is not as anachronistic as it first seems,[215] critics–as representatives of modern readers–tend to equate Mr Ayscough with the classical heroes of detective fiction. Eriksson writes:

> Moreover, […] there is an apparent likeness between Ayscough and Poe's Dupin. The modern narrator describes Ayscough as a "very small, frail and bewigged man…of the puny build of a Pope and Voltaire" […]. Comparing Ayscough with these intellectual giants that were at the same time physically small lends him faculties that are standard fare in the tradition of detective fiction. Poe, in his creation of Dupin, a figure of pure intellect, once set this standard, implied in the opening of the first detective story: "As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*." […] This opposition between intellect and muscles, most critics hold, is expressed in Poe's play with the double detective/criminal.[216]

Although the equation of Ayscough with Dupin is clever and informative, Eriksson neglects the double semantic structure of the quotation in question. It is important to note that the similarity with Dupin or other heroes of detective fiction is only suggested by the text. That is, the modern reader spots this similarity since he or she has previous reading experiences of classical detective

[215] The novel, of course, plays here with the reader's beliefs as to what is anachronistic and what is not, thus at least partially violating the conventions of realist aesthetics. The anachronisms of this type are not, in other words, anachronism in material culture (i.e. not clear anachronisms at the diegetic level of the narrative) but they create, however, an anachronistic effect at the reader's level of the narrative because of their atypicality.

[216] Eriksson 1995, 200.

stories, and especially of Poe's texts. Thus, the prochronistic equation with Dupin is the co-product of the reader's literary competence and the latent semantic possibilities of the text. However, what the quotation from Fowles's novel truly denotes, is that Ayscough has the same physical qualities as the famous philosophers and writers of the Enlightenment, Voltaire and Pope. Consequently, it is vital to compare Ayscough also with Voltaire and Pope, i.e. with the intellectual traits they represent, and thus, with the other representatives of the Enlightenment.

As the quotation in question draws a parallel between the famous eighteenth-century authors and the classical hero of detective stories, it reveals again the essential connection between the Enlightenment and the origin of a modern detective. Ayscough is the representative of the ideological traits which were vital for the rise of detective fiction and whose origin lies in the Enlightenment. These traits include the assault on superstition, the denial of supernatural interpretations of earthly occurrences (Voltaire's deism), and the mechanistic and empiricist explanation of natural phenomena (following Newton and Locke). In sum, the comparison between Ayscough and the Enlightenment writers strengthens the idea of *A Maggot* as a study of the origins of detective fiction and its ideological background and emphases.

I shall assess *A Maggot* as a detective story in more detail in Chapter 7.

3.3 Postmodernist Intertextuality and History

Markku Ihonen has rightly claimed that intertextuality is a "constitutive feature" of historical fiction, since a historical novel always has to give an impression that it contains a subtext, otherwise it would not be seen as especially a historical novel. A historiographical text and also beliefs, myths and legends can function

as subtext for a historical novel.[217] Yet a historical novel might, of course, comprise several other forms of subtexts as well, such as fictional ones or those of the visual arts. However, rather than defining historical fiction as a distinctive genre, the way they are used point to the idiosyncratic styles of different poetic periods and kinds of historical fiction.

The postmodernist historical novel frequently parades the possibilities of intertextuality. In this it seems to depart from classical historical novels since such flaunting of intertextuality in postmodernist fiction often results in emphasising the artificiality of historical representation, i.e. the violation of the reality effect. On the other hand, through the flaunting of different kinds of historical subtexts, such as poems, paintings or documents from the represented historical period, postmodernist historical novels reveal that history is also present to us via different kinds of representations, and not only through official historiographies.

In the following, I shall examine the multiple forms and functions of intertextuality in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. My aim is to make an effort to construct a typology of the forms and functions of intertextuality in these two particular texts. In addition, I will interpret some intertextual relations in more detail already in this chapter as this provides, among other things, an understanding of the novel's way of building a certain kind of historical representation. However, the chapter also provides a theoretical framework for the other particular intertextual analyses in subsequent chapters.

3.3.1 Forms of Intertextuality in Postmodernist Historical Fiction

First of all, a historical novel may have *a historiographical text* or *a historical anecdote* as its subtext. It is, nevertheless, not inevitable that the main storyline of the novel is closely analogous to the historical narrative: the historical narrative

[217] Ihonen 1991, 113.

and the imagined, fictional events are combined in several different ways in classical historical novels. For instance, Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* uses historical events only as a starting point for the description of a fictitious adventure.

The main storyline of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* does not follow any known historical narrative. The history of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood has a special standing in the novel, as Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti appear in the text as characters and as they and their London home play an important part in the plot.[218]

The French Lieutenant's Woman also has the history of Marie de Morell and the trial of Emile de La Roncière in 1835 as its subtext, but the story is a strongly transformed variation on it. The novel resituates the story both historically and spatially and adjusts it in many ways. The story of Emile de La Roncière is briefly recapitulated by the narrator in the beginning of Chapter 28, and it is not difficult to recognise the paradigmatic similarities with this historical narrative and the novel's story of Sarah and her (fictitious, as it were) French lieutenant. Nevertheless, the paradigmatic resemblance between the text and subtext has an effect on the interpretation of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: the chapter points to a defined interpretation of Sarah's behaviour, or its psychological explanation, as it rationalises Marie's hysterical behaviour as "a pitiable striving for love and security."[219] In a similar manner, Sarah's sentimental behaviour and her imaginative story of the losing of her honour to the French lieutenant could be seen as efforts to improve her situation in life.

This comparison between certain characters of the text and subtext takes place in Fowles's fiction repeatedly both at the diegetic and extradiegetic levels of the narrative. For instance, 'The Ebony Tower' has Marie de France's medieval lai *Eliduc* as well as Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912) as its subtexts, and it is not only the reader who can compare these stories; some of the characters also seem

[218] See Ch. 5.1 and Ch. 5.2.

[219] *FLW*, 204.

to estimate their own (or the other characters') actions and morality according to their suggested counterparts in these subtexts, whether correctly or not. Similarly, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Charles Smithson is compared to Emile de La Roncière and Sarah Woodruff to Marie de Morell at both levels of the narrative.

At the diegetic level, Charles Smithson mirrors himself to Emile and Sarah to Marie, which is of course precisely what Dr Grogan intends by lending the medical case history for Charles to warn him of Sarah's hysterical nature. At the extradiegetic level, the narrator's paraphrase of Marie de Morell's case is a *mise an abyme* in Fowles's text, since it works like a mirror for the whole story. In addition, all the subsequent commentaries on the case work as subtexts or metatexts that the reader might use in order to estimate the representation of Sarah's character and her suggested melancholic and hysterical nature. The function of this process is that the novel's representation becomes differently evaluated as our comprehension of people's mental illnesses changes. This seems to be foreseen by the novel, because one of its mottos is the following poem by Clough:

> Assumptions, hasty, crude, and vain,
> Full oft to use will Science deign;
> The corks the novice plies today
> The swimmer soon shall cast away.[220]

Of course, the novel activates as its subtexts *the historiography of the period* in many ways. The novel presumes that, for instance, the scientific, psychological, aesthetic and political theories and movements of the mid-nineteenth century are at least in the main points known to the reader, as the novel's representation of its several characters and the motivation of their actions are grounded in this knowledge. The dialogue between the creationists and Darwinists, the life and

[220] Clough 1840; quoted in *FLW*, 199.

ideas of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, and the history of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as an artistic and cultural movement, for instance, are the subjects of the many historical works and instructional books that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* activates as its subtexts. Nevertheless, this kind of intertextuality is not specific, as the novel does not just activate some particular historiographical work as its subtext but rather a large, indefinable body of texts that constitute an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Victorian era.

In *A Maggot*, the story of Rebecca Lee is clearly linked with the historical biography of her mother Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers and the history of British Quakers. On this point, it resembles the textual strategy applied in Walter Scott's historical novels: they often have a known history as the starting point and connect to an invented history (like the invented story of the Dean's sisters in *The Heart of Midlothian*). Nevertheless, the story of Rebecca Lee clearly breaks with the constraints of classical historical novels as it adds the white areas of history with clearly improbable events.

The French Lieutenant's Woman and *A Maggot* allude to several *fictional narratives* and *works of poetry*. I shall analyse and refer to some of them where relevant in this study. Suffice it to mention here that these literary subtexts fall into two categories, when approached from a historical point of view: (i) those that originate approximately from the historical era of the novel's stories, i.e. fictions, poems or plays written in the early eighteenth (*A Maggot*) and the second half of the nineteenth (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*) century; and (ii) those not situated in the represented historical periods, that is, those subtexts that are from the preceding or following historical eras. To the first (i) category belong, for example, Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), the mock heroic play referred to in *A Maggot*, and several novels and poems by Hardy, Clough and Tennyson cited in the epigraphs of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. As we shall see above, there are allusions to several novels by Hardy, another "provincial" author from Dorset, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. One of the functions of these literary subtexts is that they reveal that history is intertextual and not only created by the historians. The second category (ii) comprises surprisingly few

particular subtexts that become activated in the interpretation. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* cites only Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion* (1818), and no contemporary fiction. Austen's novel is motivated partly because it situates some event in Lyme Regis. However, the narrator mentions in passing several authors belonging to this category, like Cervantes, Brecht, Catullus and Milton.[221] Yet, if we count the particular activated subtexts, the stress is on the Victorian and the eighteenth-century subtexts.

A special case of the intertextuality of Fowles's texts is their *autoallusions*. The Stonehenge scene of *A Maggot* refers to Fowles's essay *The Enigma of Stonehenge* (or the other way round) and it therefore creates an interpretative connection between these two different kinds of texts.[222] Important also are those autoallusions that appear in Fowles's commentaries, that is metatexts, on his own fiction. These metatexts are unofficial but yet set up a contract between the reader and the primary text.[223] Therefore, the metatexts function as heuristic devices in intertextual readings. Such is, for instance, the allusion to *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in the 'Foreword' to Claire de Duras's *Ourika* (1823).[224]

The allusions to different kinds of mythologies are a vital part of the intertextuality of *A Maggot*. It offers allusions to antique, Celtic, and Christian mythologies. One important function of the local allusion to other texts is its capability of activating the whole story in the reading process.

Accordingly, *A Maggot* employs the Gospels as a central subtext. In actual fact, *A Maggot* can be read as a partial transformation of the Gospels. It rewrites some of the events of the Gospels in eighteenth-century England. Already the name of Mr Bartholomew refers to an apostolic mission, since Bartholomew was the thirteenth disciple of Christ. A sword is often his symbol in the visual arts.[225] However, particularly in Rebecca's testimony he becomes associated with Christ,

[221] Hutcheon 1980, 59.

[222] See below Ch. 6.3.

[223] Cf. Genette 1997, 307.

[224] *O*, xxix. See below 3.5.

[225] Tarbox 1988, 146.

as Rebecca claims to have seen that his face was that of Christ.[226] This *anagnorisis*, then, encourages us to see other similarities between the two narratives. One of them is that Mr Ayscough declares in his report to his employer, the anonymous Yr Grace, that Mr Bartholomew was a rebel who aimed at destroying the determining social order, religious norms and the principle of private property.[227] This seems to accord with the reasons that led the Pharisees to condemn and the Romans to crucify Jesus. At least the novel encourages an interpretation of the events of the Bible accordingly. Moreover, Mr Bartholomew is *Deus absconditus*, who disappears from a cave, that is, like Christ.[228] Afterwards, Mr Bartholomew reveals himself to Rebecca. The novel thus rewrites the scene of the Gospels in which Christ appears to Maria Magdalene and some other women after his death. Indeed, Maria was originally a prostitute like Rebecca. Jesus expels seven demons from Maria, and similarly, Mr Bartholomew changes Rebecca's life and makes her a devotee of God.

This intertextual relationship with the Gospels shows that similar kinds of social, cultural and religious circumstances seem to govern different historical eras and distant cultures. The novel thus makes a comparison between first century Palestine, a remote corner of the Roman Empire at that time, and eighteenth-century England. This kind of historical embedding via intertextuality also takes place in *The Ebony Tower*, in which the Middle Ages and the 1970s are juxtaposed.[229] In *A Maggot* the situation hints at a cyclical notion of history, because the novel seems to suggest that the alternation of strong social and cultural determination (*stasis*) and indeterminacy (*kinesis*) characterise historical development. The recurring stasis is, moreover, suggested repeatedly to create movements of resistance that seek freedom from the prevailing power structures, like religious sects that oppose the official faith because it has already hardened into a dogma and because it has become the servant of the ruling power.

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[226] *M*, 383.

[227] *M*, 441-450.

[228] Cf. *ET*, 235 and Brax 1992, 53-54.

[229] See Brax 1993, passim.

3.3.2 Types of Allusions: Dates

I have now listed what I consider to be the central subtexts of Fowles's two novels and made an effort to characterise their types. However, another way to approach the question would be to ask what kinds of allusions or textual indicators these relations depend on. Some of these textual indicators are named in the above examination with more or less accuracy, like the names of historical characters or groups. I shall not go in to this question further here, because I found it to be a secondary matter in this context and because it is dealt with in more detail within each intertextual analysis of this study. However, I shall examine here one kind of allusion that is especially prominent within historical fictions, namely that of dates.

Dates locate the events of historical fictions to a certain historical continuum, and thus refer to ongoing historical processes, but they also function as exact allusions to significant events that took place in the year in question.[230] The events of the main storyline (the diegetic level of the narrative) in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is situated in 1867, exclusive of the two last endings that take place two years later, in 1869. It is thematically significant that Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* was published in 1867, because the novel portrays life in a Victorian class society. Moreover, the novel's motto and some of its epigraphs are quotations from *Das Kapital*.[231] 1867 is also the year of the first parliamentary effort to grant women the right to vote in England. Also this is thematically vital as the novel portrays particularly the question of female emancipation. In the same year too Thomas Hardy's affair with his cousin Tryphena began, a

[230] Pekka Tammi notes in his study of Vladimir Nabokov's poetics of dates that "like other textual elements, dates may function in a *metonymical* fashion, activating broad literary and extra-literary (i.e historical) frames of reference within the bounds of single works." According to Tammi, the first more systematic study of dates as a specifically semiotic question was written by Z. G. Mints (1989) in her study of the poetry of the Russian symbolist Aleksandr Blok (Tammi 1999, 91).

[231] See below n284.

biographical occurrence which is also mentioned in the novel.[232] The strong influence of Hardy on Fowles's fiction, realised clearly in the use of Hardy's novels as its subtexts, is felt in this allusion as well.[233]

As regards the year 1736, in which the main story of *A Maggot* is set, there took place a mob rioting in Scotland known as the Tolbooth Riots. This historical fact is made relevant in the context of the novel because the story of the riot is told in the novel's facsimile scraps from *The Gentleman's Magazine* of the same year. These scraps form together a full presentation of this historical occurrence: from the attack on the prison of Tolbooth in Edinburgh to the mob uprising and lynching of Captain Porteus, and finally, to the delivering of the rebels' sentences. This story functions as substantiation for the narrator's estimation of the social situation and tensions of the time and the novel's portrayal of the fear of the uprising of the crowd. The narrator mentions that in this historical era in which "*progredi est regredi*,"[234] all change was feared:

> It was why the mob was feared almost universally, by Whig and Tory, conformist and dissenter, above the line. It threatened political upset and change; worst of all, it threatened property. The measure brought in to deal with it through magistrates and militia, the Riot Act of 1715, became almost holy in its status; while English criminal law remained barbaric in its brutality, its characteristically excessive punishments for anyone who infringed the sanctity of property in another way, by minor theft.[235]

Another important historical occurrence in the England of 1736 was the issuing of the law against the persecution of witches. The year is therefore a noteworthy event in the arrival of rationalist thought in England. Witch-hunts had started to

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[232] *FLW*, 236.

[233] I am here indebted to Simon Loveday, who refers to these historiographical and biographical facts in his analysis of the novel (1985, 50). For the use of Hardy's subtexts in *FLW*, see below Ch. 5.2.

[234] This is a parodic inversion of the saying *Non progredi est regredi*.

[235] *M*, 234.

quieten down in Europe from the 1650s onwards, since Western rationalism had begun to gain ground as a new philosophy. The law forbidding these hunts was issued in France in 1682 and in Prussia in 1714, and the last official execution of witches took place in Poland in 1793.[236] The question of old superstition finds its manifestation in the novel especially in David Jones's testimony and in his belief in witchcraft. Even if his testimony cannot be regarded as notable as Rebecca Lee's, it nevertheless is historically motivated. Moreover, David Jones's superstition forms a counterpart to Mr Ayscough's rationalism and empiricism, which thus emphasises the modernity of the attorney's enlightened efforts to solve the crime.

It is noteworthy, though, that the novel also manipulates the dates of historical events. As mentioned in the novel's epilogue, the birth date of Ann Lee is not historically accurate. Through this anachronism, the novel strongly violates the realist constraint on the classical historical novel and shows accordingly "how little this is a [classical] historical novel."[237] This manipulation is, however, not done without good reason: it at least serves the linking of the fictional story to the time period of the Tolbooth Riots as well as making it possible to schedule the events around May Day, the day in which the witches fly (and in which the Celtic May Queen appears).[238] Moreover, the misdating results in emphasising the ethical, historical and existentialist thematics of the novel as it suggests that the aim of the novel lies elsewhere than in the historical recording of accurate events.

Another feature of dates in historical fiction is that they allude not only to official historiography but also to other literature and fiction. Thus, the year 1736 alludes to Fielding's famous satirical play *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* (1737). In addition, it alludes to Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818); Scott's novel set its story in the year in question and, most interestingly, links its fictional events with the Tolbooth Riots.

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[236] Thomsen 1995, 49.

[237] *M*, 455.

[238] See below Ch. 6.3.

The most important feature of these intertextual links is, however, how the subtexts in question become activated in the process of reading and interpretation. In this respect, *The Heart of Midlothian* is an interesting kind of subtext. First, it seems that the intertextual relationship between these two texts is unintentional. In his letter to Lance St John Butler, Fowles denies this intertextual link: "when questioned about it Fowles denies any intention to suggest anything by an intertext of which he is evidently unaware."[239] However, unintentional subtexts may also take part in the signification process of a literary text.[240] Accordingly, the intertextual relation between Fowles's and Scott's novels seems to become activated in reading at least in a more fundamental way than just being "one more way in which his [Fowles's] text travels in time."[241]

Especially noteworthy are the narrative and generic similarities that exist between these two texts. First, both texts apply the conventions of romance: they are both representations of a quest or adventure. In this respect, one of the most important similarities in them is the *penseroso* phase, in which the active quest turns into a contemplative one. According to Frye, in this phase the timeless apocalyptic world and the world functioning according to natural laws often meet. Frye calls this occurrence the *point of epiphany*.[242] I shall discuss the epiphanies in Fowles's fiction in more detail below, in Chapter 4.3. It suffices here to mention that both novels portray the meeting of two women, one of low birth and the other noble. In Scott's novel the meeting of these two women, Jeanie Deans and Queen Caroline, is profane. It brings to a climax Jeanie Deans's journey, as she manages to win Queen Caroline's favour and so save her sister. In *A Maggot* this meeting has an aura of mystery as in, say, the mysterious encounters in the magical woods in medieval romances, and it can be interpreted in several ways. The identity of the noble woman Rebecca Lee confronts remains ultimately open, as the lady in the cave can be seen either as a Christian Holy

[239] Butler 1994, 82.

[240] See Brax 1997, 31-32.

[241] Butler 1994, 82.

[242] Frye 1957, 203-206.

Mother, a Celtic tripartite Mother Goddess, or a pagan witch, some time-traveller or an alien, or just some person from a criminal band.[243] The mention in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of the visit of the queen of Poland to England in the same year adds to the multiplicity of interpretative possibilities. Fowles's novel thus further casts aside the realist aesthetics in this respect, and it openly reveals its connections to the romance tradition, a tradition that Scott's novel tried to hide behind its external realism.[244]

In several of Fowles's prose fictions, the female characters are in intertextual relationship with other women figures in literature.[245] In *A Maggot*, Rebecca Lee's character resembles in her religious feeling, in her intemperate testimony, and in her spontaneity and inspiration Jeanie Deans's. In Scott's novel, the Duke of Argyle tells Jeanie that her appeal to Queen Caroline should be like a sermon. Thus, the question is of overcoming the problems through religion. This closely resembles the thematics of Fowles's novel, in which the question is about religious feeling or even fanaticism, or of the religious spirit of rebellion anticipating the Romantic Age. It should be acknowledged that Rebecca Lee is from a puritan family just as Jeanie and Effie Deans. Moreover, both novels offer a portrait of a women's extramarital sexual behaviour as illegal or dissolute in the past.

Thematically, then, both novels deal with resistance against the inhuman laws of the times. Scott's novel goes against too tight a law for child murder: Effie Deans is accused of giving birth without help, which was viewed as a murder in those days. This kind of resistance to inhuman laws and customs is one of the central themes in Fowles's historical and other fictions. This conception is expressed clearly in *The Ebony Tower*: even if "all civilization is based on agreed codes and symbols of mutual trust" all laws and ideas that "deny human facts"

[243] See below Ch. 6.

[244] See below Ch. 4.1.

[245] See e.g. Brax 1993, 140.

should be opposed.[246] This is recognisable both in *The Heart of Midlothian* and *A Maggot*, novels in which the theme of resistance is religious, social and psychological. In the latter the strict rationalism, which also has connections to the power politics of the time, is aimed at strictly categorising people according to gender or rank and that therefore supports social and political stasis and determination.

3.4 Aspects of Postmodernist Paratextuality

The term *paratextuality* refers to texts connected to the main body of the literary work, such as titles, prefaces, or epigraphs.[247] In the following, I shall study the acknowledgements page for *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the preface of *A Maggot* and consider their function in the novels. I will briefly assess their relationship to the conventional openings of historical novels. I shall not deal with the other paratexts of these novels in this context. The epilogue of *A Maggot* is dealt with later in another chapter because of its essayistic nature.[248] *The French Lieutenant's Woman* parades epigraphs to the degree that it can be considered even to parody a Romanticist convention. However, I shall make only

[246] *ET*, 50, 122.

[247] Gerard Genetté uses the term *transtextuality* to cover all the different forms of associations between different texts. He defines transtextuality, or the textual transcendence of a text, as "all that sets a text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (1997, 1). He separates five types of transtextuality, of which intertextuality is only one. These are (1) hypertextuality (textual transformations and imitations), (2) paratextuality (texts connected to the main body of the text, like titles, prefaces, footnotes, or epigraphs), (3) metatextuality ("commentaries"), (4) intertextuality (textual relationships based on allusions, citations and stylistic loans), and (5) architextuality (the generic type of a text, the "most silent" relationship).

[248] See Ch. 3.6.3.

brief references to the epigraphs and not approach them systematically, because a comprehensive interpretation would require an extensive study of its own.[249]

The acknowledgements page is one of the conventional paratexts for different kinds of historical fictions that emphasise the reality behind the fictional narrative.[250] The pragmatic function of the expressions of indebtedness and the revealing of sources is that they make a historical novel seem more like an authentic historiography. This impression is supported by the genuineness of the references mentioned. When realised in realistic manner, the convention of acknowledgements is aimed at producing a sense of authenticity.

For instance, in the preface to *The Agony and the Ecstasy. A Novel of Michelangelo* (1961) Irving Stone expresses his gratefulness for every art historian, professor and archivist who has helped him to gather the material for his biographical novel. Regularly, at least some references are mentioned in these pages. Stone tells us, *inter alia*, that his work began when he gave 495 of Michelangelo's letters to be translated and that a lot of original sources are published in his novel for the first time.

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[249] For a discussion of the role and functions of the epigraphs in *FLW*, see Bowen 1995. For a general account of the politics of paratextuality in postmodernist fiction, see Hutcheon 1989, 82-92.

[250] Another conventional paratext usually aimed at creating an air of truthfulness to historical fiction is the fictitious editor's or publisher's commentary on the discovered manuscript, diary or letters. For instance, the "publisher's" forewords (signed by J.K.) to Jaan Kross's *Keisri Hull* (1978) introduces the book as composed solely from a diary by a person called Ingnatjev. As is common with these kinds of comments, the facts given in the forewords are somewhat indefinite: the "publisher" does not mention the name of the bearer of the manuscript, and the last name of the writer of the diary is simply forgotten. In Orhan Pamuk's *Beyaz Kale* (1985, Eng. trans. *White Castle*, 1990) the publisher Faruk Darvinoglu, who is "prone to boozing," claims that he has found and filched a manuscript from some forgotten archive of the governor's office in Gebze, and that a certain young woman with goggles and a cigarette encouraged him to publish it. As the origins of the manuscript or the motives to publish it remain vague in this sort of commentary, only a naïve reader will take them as plain facts. –These kinds of paratexts are not found in Fowles's novels.

Even if *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is not a biographical novel, its acknowledgements page operates likewise as an instrument for producing a realist effect and for setting an authentic tone for the novel. Even if the page is brief, several references are included. The author (the prologue is signed by J.F.) thanks different publishers for permission to quote from literary texts. More important for the reality effect is that some well-known non-fiction dealing with the Victorian Age is mentioned as sources, namely G. M. Young's *Victorian Essays* and *Portrait of an Age*. Also, the author lays bare that he has used some extracts, and "stolen" some minor details from E. Royston Pike's famous collection of documentary texts, *Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age*. It would be foolish to deny the sincerity of these expressions of gratitude. Yet it is equally important to pay attention to the expectations they cause in the reader.[251]

Moreover, the last sentence of the page reveals a realist philosophical attitude toward historical fiction and historical representation in general: "I recommend this brilliant anthology [E. Royston Pike's anthology] most warmly to any reader who would like to know *more of the reality behind my fiction*."[252] This recommendation adheres to the notion of history as independent of interpretation and as easily tangible through historical records and documents such as those advanced in Royston's anthology: reality resides in documents. Also, it implies that a fictional text can imitate historical reality and, at least partially, reveal the truth of a historical period and its cultural climate: the word *more* suggests

[251] The effect is partially weakened, though, if one reads Michael Mason's criticism of Pike's anthology and of Fowles's use of it in the novel (Mason 1981). However, it is problematic that Mason seems not to be aware of the basics of literary theory. At least Mason confuses the narrator of the novel with its real author, which results in an absurd claim that Fowles has "a mania for knowledge-ability" (ibid.). Mason does not notice that the novel itself deconstructs the mania of the narrator by claiming that historical knowledge is as unreliable and indeterminate as personal memories (see below Ch. 3.5). It should be noted too that Mason does not give too much value to Michel Foucault's view about Victorian sexuality in his own study on the subject. Foucault's view, however, seems to agree in several ways with *FLW*'s presentation of the matter (cf. Mason 1995, 172 and below Ch. 5.3).

[252] *FLW*, 6 (my italics).

modestly that the novel offer at least some knowledge of reality. Thus, the sentence expresses the belief that documentary texts and historical fiction serve the same mission of revealing historical truth. Thus, the acknowledgements page of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* conforms essentially to the principles of realist aesthetics and functions as a vehicle for producing the effect of the historically real.

However, Linda Hutcheon suggests that the paratexts of the novel also have another function: to direct the reader's attention to the textual nature of history and to the processes by which we construct history out of its textual representations. She suggests that at least the footnotes of the novel have this second function, even if they are primarily supposed to create the reality effect just because the footnote convention is common from historical writings:

> [T]hey [the footnoting conventions in historiographic metafiction] do indeed function here as self-reflexive signals to assure the reader as to the historical credibility of the particular witness or authority cited, while at the same time they also disrupt our reading – that is, our creating – of a coherent, totalizing fictive narrative. In other words, these notes operate centrifugally as well as centripetally.[253]

Yet I believe that the claim made for a second function of the preface and footnotes cannot be sustained. It seems more correct to argue that the preface and the footnotes are parts of the textual strategy of the novel that is aimed at creating a tension between the creation of the reality effect and its metafictional disruption that results finally in probing into the nature of historical writings in general. In other words, it is rather the open metafictional questioning of determinate historical representation of the novel that seems to function so as to make the reader read these footnotes and the preface critically and to cast doubt on the convention. The footnotes and other paratexts of the novel do not in themselves

[253] Hutcheon 1989, 85.

refer to the textual nature of history, and the disruption of the reader's linear reading alone is not enough to signal the textuality of history.

The prologue to *A Maggot* has already a different function than the acknowledgements page of *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* It is not troubled with emphasising the connection between reality and fiction. On the contrary, it draws attention to the process of creating fiction and the characters' artificial design:

> For some years before its writing a small group of travellers, faceless, without apparent motive, went in my mind towards an event. Evidently in some past […] but beyond this very primitive image, nothing. I do not know where it came from, or why it kept obstinately rising from my unconscious. […]
>
> However, one day one of the riders gained a face. By chance I acquired a pencil and water-colour drawing of a young woman.[254]

The prologue presents the characters of the novel as imaginary, originating from the author's mind.

Interestingly, an example of a similar kind of foreword is found as well in the classical tradition of historical novels. In the preface to Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) the author tells us that his characters are only like puppets in a puppet-show. The preface violates the principle of realist literary theory that forbids the author to "show his hand" in the novel. This is noteworthy, since it is Thackeray who has been claimed as the one who brought literary realism proper to England. Yet the preface is like an overture for the actual show, and as such, it does not radically threaten the general impression of the novel as being realistic. In other words, the metafictionality of Thackeray's preface, i.e. the exposure of the fictional character of the following narrative, is not adequate for producing an enduring effect of artificiality. Similarly, calling attention to the creative process

[254] *M*, 5.

in *A Maggot*'s prologue is not enough for eliminating the possible realistic expectations of the reader.

The comments about the generic character of the novel have a more destructive effect on the reader's conventional expectations. First, the author denies that the novel is biographical, even if it ends with the birth of a historical person, Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers. He adds that he "would not have this seen as a historical novel. It is maggot."[255] Thus, the preface advises the reader not to believe offhand that the occurrences preceding the birth of a famous historical character have historical accuracy, or, in more general terms, that there is necessarily "reality behind the fiction." In this sense it contradicts clearly the intent of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s acknowledgements page. Yet it paradoxically implies that it might be possible to read the text as a historical novel, otherwise it would not be reasonable to make the wish at all. If this kind of reading is suggested as possible, then the novel must possess several properties of the genre.

The aim of the prologue is, therefore, plainly to remind the reader that to read the text as historical novel would not do justice to its innermost nature and aim. As a warning to the reader, it also sets the author free from the moral responsibility to observe the constraints of realistic historical fiction.[256] The problem is, however, that it does not offer a clear notion of the generic character of the text to counterbalance the negative definition of it as something that is not properly a biographical or historical novel. Calling it a maggot makes the reader excited in the face of the eccentric but also confused, as a maggot is not a proper, institutionalised generic category of fiction. Thus, the preface to *A Maggot* functions transgressively, as it does not signal any kind of stylistic or generic uniformity. This can be seen, again, as one part of the poetics of mystery of the novel.[257]

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[255] *M*, 5-6.

[256] For the constraints on the realistic historical novel, see Ch. 3.1.2. For the moral responses that the deviations from the official history might cause in the reader of fiction, see Ch. 3.1.1.

[257] It must be remembered, though, that this kind of generic indeterminacy, i.e. avoiding stock

3.5 Metafictionality Reconsidered

Fowles's novel seems paradoxical in its relationship with the past. Indeed, Linda Hutcheon has maintained that postmodernist historiographic metafictions like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* succeed both in interrogating the past (as well as the present) and shaking the reader's belief in the foundations of historiography.[258] This coincides with the idea expressed earlier that while postmodernist fictions do not completely deny the possibility of historical knowledge and representation they accept and self-consciously examine certain epistemological limitations of historiography.[259] Consequently, Fowles's novel not only depicts the Victorian world but also gives an example of an acceptance of extreme uncertainty, the peculiar ethos of postmodernist historiographic metafiction.[260]

The plain fact that postmodernist historical fiction acknowledges the limits of historical knowledge has made the genre newly interesting. I agree with Linda Hutcheon's analysis that the emergence of the self-conscious postmodernist novel meant the rescuing of the mimetic novel as a genre, and not its death.[261] While *The French Lieutenant's Woman* critically evaluates the foundations of the representation of history and the moralistic aspirations of historical mimesis, it avoids propagating the idea of the transparency of language peculiar to naïve realism.

Yet, as shown above, the treatment of historical relativism finds individual expressions in postmodernist fiction, and the degree of the uncertainty indicated varies from text to text. Moreover, different postmodernist historical fictions direct their evaluation to different features of historiography. As regards *The*

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generic decisions, paradoxically add to the informational value of fiction rather than diminish it. Redundancies make literature more readable, but the making of exceptions results in the growth of poetic information (Eco 1989, 50-52).

[258] Hutcheon 1988, 5, 20.

[259] See above Ch. 2.1.2.

[260] Cf. Hutcheon 1989, 93-117.

[261] Hutcheon 1980, 70.

French Lieutenant's Woman, it assesses at least two special aspects of historical representation.

First, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* foregrounds the questions of historical memory. The narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* compares historiography especially to the functioning of memory as a means for constructing personal mythology:

> But this is preposterous? A character is either 'real' or 'imaginary'? If you think that, *hypocrite lecteur*, [262] I can only smile. You do not even think of your own past as quite real; you dress it up, you gild it or blacken it, censor it, tinker with it…fictionalize it, in a word, and put it away on a shelf—your book, your romanced autobiography. We are all in flight from the real reality. That is a basic definition of *Homo sapiens*.[263]

It is characteristic for memory that it tries to make of our personal history a narrative that strengthens our identity. It can be argued, analogously, that as a collective memory historiography aims to strengthen or direct our cultural identity in a way that we find meaningful. It should not be forgotten, however, that the idea in question comes from Sigmund Freud, who claims that memory is a construct of both personal wishes and actual past, since it cannot make a clear distinction between the two.[264] It is interesting that Freud's idea finds it expression both in the postmodernist historical novel and scientific metahistory, which tries to reveal that all narratives of the past (memory and history) are biased and multiple.[265]

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[262] This is an allusion to Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857).

[263] *FLW*, 87.

[264] Jacobus 1987, 118-119.

[265] A passage in Jeanette Winterson's novel *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) refers to the same idea of memory and history as relative, multiple and personal: "Everyone remembers things which never happened. And it is common knowledge that people often forget things which did. Either we are all fantasists and liars or the past has nothing definite in it. I have heard people say we are shaped by our childhood. But which one?" (*SC*, 92).

Second, recent interpretations of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* show that the story leaves several questions open, and this interpretative openness is akin to the efforts to understand history repeatedly falling short, at least in minor details. For instance, it remains unclear whether Christina Rossetti and Sarah Roughwood[266] have a lesbian affair at the end of the novel.[267] That Charles, Dr Grogan and, ultimately, the reader can not determine the true nature of Sarah is also a sign of the deficiencies of knowledge. The characters of Charles and Sarah are therefore metonyms for the idea that knowledge is always coloured, limited by the available texts and the archive they form and informed by the *episteme* of the historical period.[268]

Having said this much, I shall examine the recent debate of the ideological aspects of metafictionality in Fowles's fiction. Interestingly, recent feminist criticism has questioned the early enthusiastic estimations of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as historiographic metafiction. Yet it seems to me that there is still another argument to make that might show the novel in a somewhat different light.

Linda Hutcheon has stressed the postmodern ethics of the chapter in her influential reading of the novel in *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980). In her opinion the metafictionality of the novel does not simply reveal its own narrativity but is also a political act. She argues that the contemporary narrator of the novel interrupts the story in order to remind the reader that our reality is partly fictitious. She argues that the political agenda of the novel is to reveal that imagination is either ethical or non-ethical, either an act of freedom or possession.[269]

Some of the recent feminist and post-structuralist criticism of the novel has taken Hutcheon's interpretation of the novel as a starting point, even if the criticism has come to different conclusions. For instance, Deborah Bowen

[266] Note that Sarah Woodruff changes her surname following her disappearance.

[267] Landrum 2000, 65.

[268] Cf. Stephenson 1996, 64.

[269] Hutcheon 1980, 62-65 and passim.

interprets the chapter similarly to Hutcheon as an unproblematic claim for freedom, although she arrives at a totally different result in her overall view of the novel. She claims that the emphasis on the freedom of the characters in Chapter 13 come into conflict with the "confident conclusions of the narrator." According to Bowen, it is a failure of the novel that "Fowles's complicitous use of artifice disperses the authority of the narrative voice, thus destroying his power to speak as a moralist."[270] Thus, unlike Hutcheon, Bowen, as one of the new valuers of the novel's metafictionality, finds the contemporary narrator's aspiration for moral imperatives discomforting, problematic and internally contradicting his overt aesthetic and ethical endeavour.

I believe that the case becomes clearer when Chapter 13 is read again in the light of tradition. It has not yet been commented on that the chapter seems to display a similar function to Chapter 6 of Thackeray's classical historical novel *Vanity Fair*, titled 'Vauxhall.' To draw attention to this similarity seems inevitably to lead to the argument that the valuing of Chapter 13 as a radical postmodernist innovation seems to have been grounded on an ahistorical reading of Fowles's novel.

This argument can, though, be opposed on the ground that in Thackeray's novel the metafictional comments on the principles of fiction writing are aimed at stressing the principles of realism while Fowles's chapter emphasises a totally different view of reality and moral standards. Nevertheless, the difference appears not as great as it first might seem. At least both novels make a claim about the relation between fiction and reality. Both novels, the chapters overtly declare, aim at giving a truer picture of the past than some other kind of fictional writing. Thackeray's novel parodies Victorian romances, or to be more precise, two Victorian popular literary genres, the *silver fork* and *Newgate novels*, in order to convince the reader of the superiority of its own realist literary enterprise:

[270] Bowen 1995, 70.

> We might have treated this subject in the genteel, or in the romantic, or in the facetious manner. […] Suppose we had shown how Lord Joseph Sedley fell in love, and the Marquis of Osborne became attached to Lady Amelia […] or instead of the supremely genteel, suppose we had resorted to the entirely low, and described what was going on in Mr. Sedley's kitchen;–how black Sambo was in love with the cook […], and how he fought a battle with the coachman in her behalf […]–such incidents might be made to provoke much delightful laughter, and be supposed to represent scenes of "life." Or if, on the contrary, we had taken a fancy for the terrible, and made the lover of the new *femme de chambre* a professional burglar, who bursts into the house with his band, slaughters black Sambo at the feet of his master, and carries Amelia in her nightdress […]. But my readers must hope for no such romance, only a homely story […]. And yet it is a chapter, and a very important one too. Are not there little chapters in everybody's life that seem to be nothing, and yet affect all the rest of the history?[271]

Too little weight has been given to the fact that Chapter 13 of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* similarly stresses the effort of the novelist to create a "genuine" world:

> But novelists write for countless different reasons: for money, for fame, for reviewers, for parents, for friends, for loved ones; for vanity, for pride, for curiosity, for amusement: as skilled furniture-makers enjoy making furniture, as drunkards like drinking, as judges like judging, as Sicilians like emptying a shotgun into an enemy's back. I could fill a book with reasons, and they would all be true, though not true of all. Only one same reason is shared by all of us: *we wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is.* Or was. This is why we cannot plan. We know a world is an organism, not a machine. We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world

[271] *VF*, 62-63.

> that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live.[272]

The novel, thus, claims that the authenticity and genuineness of the depiction of a fictitious world is reached when the fictitious characters are granted their freedom. This thesis seems to go to the same rhetorical effort to convince the reader of the authenticity of the depiction of the past as the parodic passage of Thackeray's novel. It does not really matter, in this respect, that Fowles's and Thackeray's novels suggest a different ontology of the historical past. Even if Fowles's novel proposes, like Hayden White, that the depiction of the past is always partly fictitious, it clearly states that its picture of the described world is more genuine, credible and morally acceptable than those of Victorian novels.

All in all, the narrator's claim for the freedom of the characters can be seen as a part of the author's effort to speak as a moralist and not in contradiction of it. Consequently, Deborah Bowen's assertion that the overt claim for freedom contradicts and disperses the authority of the narrative voice seems to be grounded on a doubtful interpretation. To ask for more freedom for the fictional characters than they had in Victorian literature is certainly a critical and a moral endeavour.

In addition, it is important to note that Fowles admits that "not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely."[273] Pamela Cooper, in another new appraisal of the metafictional structures of the novel, has paid attention to this:

> But it is important to remember that, despite its disclaimers, chapter 13 also acknowledges that the author, however great his respect for freedom as a "first principle," is still a powerful figure.[274]

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[272] *FLW*, 86.

[273] *FLW*, 86.

[274] Cooper 1991, 107. Fowles himself has admitted this in an interview with Melvyn Bragg: "What I say on the subject [whether the author controls the characters] in *The French*

Accordingly, it appears illusory to believe that the novel would let its puppets play with complete abandon. Therefore it is important not to let Chapter 13 to lead us astray, as it in fact aspires to legitimate its powerful reinterpretation of the Victorian culture and its "rewriting" of Victorian fiction.

The puppet metaphor in Chapter 13 is quite interesting as it is connected to the question of the power of the narrator. It seems that mentioning the puppets ("[p]erhaps you suppose that a novelist has only to pull the right strings and his puppets will behave in a lifelike manner"[275]) not only refers to Victorian fiction and its "omniscient and decreeing" narration in general, but particularly to *Vanity Fair*. In the beginning of Thackeray's novel, the "author" (authorial narrator) takes his puppets out of his box, and in the end of the novel he places them back as follows:

> Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or having it, is satisfied?–Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.[276]

It seems as if the three different endings of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* would parody just this particular metafictional narrative strategy of Thackeray's novel, a strategy that emphasises the power of the author over his characters. If read in the light of Fowles's novel then, *Vanity Fair* appears to offer a concrete example of the condemned pursuit of closure and omnipotent narration.

Particularly interesting in Chapter 13 is that it makes us think of the world and our lives as narratives and ourselves as characters in it. Linda Hutcheon notices this as she claims that the novel suggests that there are two kinds of imagination,

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Lieutenant's Woman is really a little bit of eye-wash. And I'm afraid I'm playing a sort of double trick on the reader. Of course I control the text [,] we all do" (quoted in Woodcock 1984, 98 and Cooper 1991, 107n5).

[275] *FLW*, 85.

[276] *VF*, 951.

one for bad and one for good.[277] In addition, the chapter suggests that the reader should estimate the effect, way and degree of the impact of Victorian heritage on her or his personal life.

Moreover, it is also the task of the reader and critic to try to find out what kind of power the novel exercises on its characters, as it now seems clear that it cannot avoid it. Readers' relation to the moral endeavour of the narrator depends on whether he or she accepts the principle of freedom as justifying this new approach to the past and to its literary discourses and whether the text seems to succeed in its (postmodernist) ethical effort. Pamela Cooper, among others, has arrived at a more critical solution than Linda Hutcheon. She stresses that the metafictional structures of the novel in fact contribute to the overall picture that Sarah is really a passive and a compliant figure without real artistic skills–that is, Sarah seems to be subordinated to the patriarchal power of the contemporary narrator in the final analysis.[278]

Yet, as I want to show more fully in Chapter 5 of this study, the just evaluation of Sarah's fate seems impossible without paying more attention to the historical situation she lives in. This principle of just historical estimation should also concern the evaluation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a cultural and artistic institution of its time and the part it plays in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. What makes the historical perspective important is that one of the principles of Fowles's postmodernist historical fictions is that the question of freedom is dealt with in terms of historical relativity. In other words, Fowles's fictions esteem every effort to restore "the human world" and "human relationships to man itself" even if they at the same time acknowledge the limitations of these efforts and the temporariness and incompleteness of their historical outcomes.[279]

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[277] Hutcheon 1980, 62-65.

[278] Cooper 1991, 114-119.

[279] Cf. the opening epigraph to *FLW*. For a discussion of the cyclic notion of history and the idea of historical change in Fowles's fiction, see above Ch. 3.3.1.

In the 'Foreword' to his English translation of Claire de Duras's *Ourika* Fowles refers to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.[280] This suggests that the principle of historical proportionality might be operative here as well and that the principle should therefore be acknowledged by the sensitive reader:

> [A] certain kind of contemporary black extremist might dismiss Ourika's story with a sneer—given the basic inauthenticity of her position, she deserves everything that comes to her. Such a sneer is, of course, historically ridiculous. By such standards, we should have to blame Columbus for taking so long to cross the Atlantic, when he could have done it by air in a few hours. There were only two choices, in the Europe of 1780-1805, the period *Ourika* spans, for an African *woman*: she could be an ignorant slave or she could be a social leper.[281]

The 'Foreword,' an important metatext of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, also reveals that Fowles's effort to write "about a woman who had been unfairly exiled from society" was at least unconsciously influenced by the model of *Ourika*.[282] Indeed, as *The French Lieutenant's Woman* uses the same motif as its basic starting point as *Ourika*, it is fit to claim that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* should be judged with the same historical delicacy. Indeed, if the novel were to portray *Sarah* anachronistically as a strong, independent person, with the same possibilities and freedom of choice before her as the modern woman, and completely free from external pressure, the novel's historical evaluation of the burden Victorian society imposed on women would be historically inaccurate.[283] Sarah's position in the end of the novel shows rather that the emancipation of women remained incomplete at the time,[284] and simultaneously, perhaps

[280] See *O*, xxix.

[281] *FO*, xxx-xxxi.

[282] *FO*, xxx.

[283] Here we have another example of the fact that *FLW* avoids unrealistic anachronism in its effort to depict historical events and atmosphere.

[284] As Stephenson shows, Marx's epigraph in the beginning of the novel becomes ironised when

somewhat pessimistically, portrays "the despair of ever attaining freedom in a determined and determining environment."[285]

3.6 Essaying History

Besides fictional works, Fowles has throughout his literary career published nonfictional and essayistic texts on personal ideas, photography and local history. These texts include *The Aristos* (1964), *Shipwreck* (1974), *Islands* (1978), *The Tree* (1979), *The Enigma of Stonehenge* (1980), *A Short History of Lyme Regis* (1982) and *Lyme Regis, Three Town Walks* (1983). These texts are relevant within the framework of this study because their subjects and themes recur in Fowles's fictional texts. Indeed, his fiction and essays are often examined side by side. There is even local intertextuality between them and his historical novels, as will be shown later. In this chapter, however, I shall concentrate on discussing the emergence of the essayistic in his postmodernist historical fictions.

Fowles's historical fictions are the followers of essayistic novels and, specifically, essayistic historical novels. The famous essayistic passages in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1864–69) are examples of the latter tradition. These passages consider, among other things, questions of historical determinism and of the place of an individual in general history. Characteristic of the nineteenth-century novel was, in general, a convention of lecture-like passages that interrupt the narration and deal with subjects ranging from the

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the novel's project of freedom partially fails: "The text thus appears to quote Marx's words about emancipation only in order to contradict them. […] [I]t is performing variations upon the Marx epigraph, by offering the protagonists different, complex mixtures of emancipation and responsibility in its two endings" (Stephenson 1996, 68).

[285] *FO*, xxxi.

human sciences to the natural sciences, as H. K. Riikonen has observed.[286] Familiar too are the essayistic passages of Hermann Broch's trilogy *Die Schlafwandler* (1930–32). Broch's novel is commonly used as an example, along with Robert Musil's famous *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1932–33), of modernist essayistic fiction and of especially German (or to be more precise, Austrian) modernism.

What is meant, then, by the terms *essayistic* or *essayistic narration*? With these terms I refer to those relatively long passages of narration that interrupt completely the course of events (the time of events is zero) and that (1) provide a historical, social, psychological, economic, cultural, philosophical, etc., background information for the depicted happenings, (2) that speak about different matters that are in some way connected to those happenings, or (3) that self-consciously (metafictionally) comment on the poetic or rhetorical nature of the text in question. A further characteristic of these essayistic passages is that they do not necessarily have all the characteristics of an independent essay. Thus, they might begin unexpectedly and without clear boundaries in the middle of a different kind of narration. If they form an independent section, a chapter, an epilogue or a prologue, within the text, they are in many ways interconnected with the textual whole. In other words, if separated from their context, they lose something of the thematic, dialogical and explanatory functions that they serve in it.

Given these emphases, I have determined as passages of essayistic narration in Fowles's historical fictions the following sections: Chapters 13 and 35 of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the epilogue of *A Maggot* and a particular short section in the beginning of the novel.[287] In the present chapter, my aim is rather to draw an overall picture of the issues they raise than go into details. However, I shall begin by considering the way Fowles's fictions combine essayistic and fictional narration.

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[286] Riikonen 1995, 194. Riikonen's example is Jules Verne's *Aventures du capitaine Hatteras* (1866).

[287] *M*, 15-17.

3.6.1 Combining Essayistic and Fictional Narration

The matter of how to combine essayistic and fictional narration in an appropriate way has frequently bewildered authors. Different opinions have been put forward, for instance, as to who should be the speaker of the essayistic passages. This question is solved in Fowles's novels in the way Broch thought would be the most suitable, namely not to permit a character to speak these passages but to leave it to the authorial narrator.[288]

A special characteristic of this in both of Fowles's novels is, however, the temporal and cultural distance between the extradiegetic level of the narrator and the diegetic level of the portrayed world. The modern terminology used by the narrator emphasises this temporal distance–not only the modern language in general but especially the expressly anachronistic words and utterances of the narrator.[289] This narrative strategy highlights the anachronistic gaze of the narrator and by doing that makes the reader continuously aware of the fact that history is approached from a historical and cultural distance. Ultimately, this narrative strategy points to an overall generic feature of these novels, thematised also in several other postmodernist historical fictions, namely that the history portrayed is a relative and indeterminate construction. In other words, the marked distance between narrator and the world portrayed tells ultimately that history is always already mediated and constructed and not objectively present.

Another manner in which Broch combined fictional and essayistic narration is the situating of a relatively long essayistic passage at the end of the novel. This is put into effect also in *A Maggot*: its epilogue bears outward similarity to the essayistic final passage of *Die Schlafwandler*. The difference lies naturally in the fact that in Fowles's novel the essayistic chapter is separated from the other text by the title 'Epilogue,' whereas the essayistic passage of Broch's novel grows

[288] De Obaldia 1995, 195.

[289] See above Ch. 3.2.

without boundaries from the description of the future life of the protagonist Hugenau to a relatively independent cultural-historical essay.

It is intriguing to approach the combining of the essayistic and fictional in Fowles's novels in the light of Romantic theories of literature. In doing this, it is possible to position the postmodernist narrative strategies in the novelistic tradition more broadly.

The Romantic theorists, especially Friedrich Schlegel, saw that it is just the ability of the novel to combine essayistic and fictional narration that makes it a Romantic genre *par excellence*. In this Romantic genre the cognitive and the aesthetic, reason and the senses, meet and are thus transcended while something more profound comes into being. Hegel calls this deeper understanding "the whole truth."[290] The thought that Fowles's novels also aim at such an effect through joining the fictional and essayistic is corroborated by the fact that the novel also thematises the ontological question about the separation of reason and feeling in Western cultures. As shown in this study, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* thematises the question of the relationship between empiricism and intuitive understanding through portraying the confrontation between the amateur scientist Charles Smithson and the family tutor Sarah Woodruff; *A Maggot*, for its part, symbolically portrays the conflict between the Enlightenment rationalism and the approaching Romantic Age. In other words, the combining of the essayistic and fictional approach is analogic to a theme that both the novels share, the revelations about the one-sidedness of Western rationalism.

The justification for making such an analogy is that Fowles emphasises the worth of the aesthetic approach as supplementary to the cognitive in several of his independent essays. For example, in *The Nature of Nature* (1995) Fowles proposes that Western culture has not yet found a way to unconstrainedly connect reason and feeling: "marrying feeling and knowing, that is the problem," he states.[291] In more general terms, the way Fowles approaches this theme both in

[290] De Obaldia 1995, 205.

[291] *NN*, 344.

his fiction and essayistic texts is a sign of an effort to connect the aesthetic and cognitive resources of these two separate genres in order to surpass their individual limitations.

Interestingly, the Romantic literary theorists spoke for the combining of these two genres also because the essayistic made possible the self-reflective considerations about literature as literature. Romantic theory, therefore, appreciated self-reflectivity, as Claire de Obaldia shows:

> The essayistic novel is entitled to claim its supreme status in Romantic poetry in so far as 'in all its descriptions, this poetry should describe itself, and always be simultaneously poetry and the poetry of poetry'. The early Romantic predilection for the novel derives in other words as much from the genre's poetic potential as from its constituent capacity for self-reflection. A writer must reflect or philosophize about his art, and so the novel must include a philosophy of the novel: this is a philosophy which has transferred its interest in the individual work towards the principles of aesthetic experience which inform it, a theory of the novel which must itself 'represent the representation' and become a novel.[292]

Thus, the metafictionality of postmodernist fiction could be seen as the follower of this Romantic tradition, and especially of the thoughts of Friedrich Schlegel. Metafictionality in this Romantic sense finds its expression in Chapter 13 of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in which the narrator estimates historical narration as vulnerable process as personal memory, and both in *A Maggot*'s preface and epilogue that aim to describe the nature of the novel and that refer to the differences between history and the historical novel. Consequently, Fowles's novels become novels about novels in the Romantic manner. Metafictionality is a dominant feature of the postmodernist novel, but as shown, the subgenre also meets the demands of Romantic literary theory in this respect.

[292] De Obaldia 1995, 202.

However, each literary period seems to find different uses for essayistic self-reflection. As we have seen, the Romantic literary theorists appreciated it as a narrative strategy because it made possible the self-conscious treatment of aesthetic principles and thus the surpassing of the limits of one particular work of art and genre. Later the strategy was used for particular rhetorical goals. The realist novelist applied it in order to underline the superiority and truthfulness of realist novelistic conventions. Consequently, as we have seen above in Chapter 3.5, *Vanity Fair* applies essayistic narration just for this particular purpose. Another example from Victorian fiction is Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers* (1857), in which the narrator notes that it is a pity that people have not yet invented a method like the daguerreotype or photography that would automatically transfer the author's mental picture of his characters to a literally impressive expression.[293] In an exact contrast to realist novels and their overtly expressed claims for the authenticity of mimesis, Fowles's postmodernist historical fictions use essayistic metafictional patterns to show the problems of historical narration and realist literary conventions.

3.6.2 Indeterminate Nature

> In some mysterious way woods have never seemed to me to be static things.[294]

Other subjects of the essayistic passages or chapters of Fowles's postmodernist historical novels concern the sexuality, nature and cultural climate of the historical era represented. I shall return to a discussion of the representation of sexuality in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in Chapter 5.3. For now, I shall move on to consider the short essayistic passage at the beginning of *A Maggot*.

[293] *BT*, 144.

[294] *T*, 58.

The three-page essayistic passage in question grows suddenly but organically from the narrator's description of how an odd group of five travellers arrives at the town of C– in the Southwest of England. The reader acquainted with Fowles's earlier fiction and essayistic texts recognise in the passage familiar thematic features. Most importantly, the passage takes up the question of man's relationship to nature, a theme dominating Fowles's literary production.

The passage estimates especially the eighteenth-century Western people's attitude towards wild and original nature. The narrator remarks that

> [t]he period had no sympathy with unregulated or primordial nature. It was aggressive wilderness, an ugly and all-invasive reminder of the Fall, of man's eternal exile from the Garden of Eden.[295]

The hostility towards nature and the will to possess and regulate it represents the stasis that the narrator claims to have dominated the whole era:

> [C]ertainly England as a whole was indulging in its favourite and sempiternal national hobby: retreating deep within itself, and united only in a constipated hatred of change of any kind.[296]

Rebecca Lee is historically atypical, since her relationship with nature is exceptional in the context of eighteenth-century cultural history. Her atypicality makes her a postmodern figure, since the protagonist of a realist historical novel represents the typical for the era, as Georg Lukács has claimed. Rebecca is characterised by her liking of flowers, and she also experiences a great personal change in the course of the novel. The symbolical meaning of her experience is strong in the novel that otherwise depicts a static and determining society. She becomes associated with flowers from the very beginning of the novel as she carries violets while riding to the town of C– with the rest of the travellers. One

[295] *M*, 15.

[296] *M*, 16.

particular scene reveals and emphasises her dissimilarity to the people of the time: she throws flowers for two shepherd children who do not understand Rebecca's act at all, considering the violets to be a completely useless gift.[297]

Thus Rebecca is similar to several other of Fowles's female characters associated with wild nature, flowers and animals.[298] Rebecca's association with flowers also strengthens the interpretation of her being a harbinger of Romanticism. Her connection to nature and to its capability for renewal emphasises also her symbolic role as a mother and a forerunner of a new historical Era. The positive attitude towards wild and unregulated nature that Rebecca's character embodies is in Fowles's fiction in general a symbol for freedom, creativity and change.[299]

Moreover, the ideas of the essayistic passage of the beginning are in accordance with the ones presented in Fowles's essay on personal ideas, *The Tree*. In this essay, published in 1976, Fowles suggests the same idea about Western hostility towards nature and the will to possess and regulate it that *A Maggot* offers a particular historical sketch. Both texts also refer to the limitations of sciences as ways to observe nature. According to the novel, the knowledge acquired with scientific methods was subordinated to a utilitarian point of view. The narrator remarks the following:

> [E]ven its [the eighteenth century] natural sciences, such as botany, though by now long founded, remained essentially hostile to wild nature, seeing it only as something to be tamed, classified, utilized, exploited.[300]

The Tree emphasises the meaning of such an individual and intuitive relationship to nature that is not grounded on an effort to possess nature.

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[297] *M*, 14.

[298] See e.g. Brax 1993, 140.

[299] Cf. Brax 1993, 136.

[300] *M*, 15.

Especially, the essay states that Westerners should be able to accept the inhumanness, unpredictability and fundamental unattainability of nature, so that they could free themselves from their alienation. The essay emphasises that nature is not something other from us but that we are part of it and that every effort to divide nature into public and private, human and inhuman, leads to losing it. The use of economical, scientific, topographic or aesthetic concepts in approaching nature only alienates people from what they are and thus expels human beings from their home planet.[301] This view is radically antipositivistic as it questions the worth of any transitional concepts in relation to experience.

The Tree seems to correspond too with the views of representation put forward in continental postmodern philosophy. One particular point of view *The Tree* add to the discussion on nature (as compared to *A Maggot*) is that the "knowing it [nature] is an art as well as a science" and that "this kind of knowledge, or relationship, is not reproducible by any other means–by painting, by photography, by words, by science itself."[302] Fowles continues by arguing that all efforts to reproduce nature can "help to induce the relationship," but no more than that. Because Fowles claims that representation can work as a heuristic device for approaching the other, the idea resembles at least partially Lyotard's thought about the presenting of the unpresentable, which is a more positive reformulation of Levinas's negative view about representation in general.[303] All in all, these two texts, *A Maggot* and *The Tree* share with postmodern ethics the idea that it is not proper to attempt to own and get hold of reality by classifying it completely.[304]

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[301] *T*, 81.

[302] *T*, 76.

[303] Cf. Gibson 1999, 66-73. Lyotard counters in this context Levinas's idea that artistic representation is always unethical because it does not grasp the diversity of the other in all its grace. Lyotard's relationship to Levinas's thought can be considered to have the same kind of traits as in Plato's and Aristotle's notions about artistic mimesis, even if on different grounds.

[304] It should be noted, however, that this criticism is present in the whole of Fowles's literary oeuvre. In particular, Fowles's fiction approaches critically the estrangement from nature that took place in the Victorian period. J. Hillis Miller describes this estrangement aptly as follows: "Nature as such, in the Wordsworthian sense of trees, mountains, and daffodils, "one impulse

Fowles's texts express, therefore, the kind of criticism of Western ontology that lies at the heart of postmodern thinking.

To sum up at this point, the essayistic passage at the beginning of *A Maggot* is vital for the reading of the narrative that follows. It prepares us for an interpretation of the symbolic confrontation between Rebecca Lee and Mr Ayscough. In this confrontation Rebecca represents *kinesis*, the power of all change, and Mr Ayscough *stasis*, a social and psychological stagnation that is, on the one hand, the result of the effort to possess nature and human nature, and on the other, of the hostility towards the efforts to build a humane society.[305]

Moreover, the passage continues the discussion of *The Tree*, a vital metatext for *A Maggot*, on the place of nature in Western culture, and opens its perspective historically. *The Tree* claims that it is difficult to repair the traces of Western rationality. The novel portrays the beginnings of this form of thought and thus continues the criticism of the Enlightenment and Western rationalism that was begun by Romanticism and that some contemporary philosophers, such as Lyotard, Derrida or Foucault, have continued.

3.6.3 The Small Narrative of the Shakers

I shall end this chapter with a brief discussion of the epilogue of *A Maggot*. This essayistic passage breaks the fictional frame with its estimation of the historical significance of the Shakers and their faith. The section is, as already stated in

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from the vernal wood," does not count for much in nineteenth-century novels as a primary source of value and meaning. It may function as a measure of the economic or social worth of the person who own the fields, parks, and woodlands of an estate, or it may be present, as sometimes in George Eliot and Henry James, in an entirely negative way, as an expression of the impossibility of life in solitude, outside society" (1990, 23). Fowles's fiction criticises especially this idea of possessing nature and of regarding it as the hostile other. As shall be shown in Ch. 4.3, in Fowles's fiction several moments of revelation take place in nature and outside society, which marks a return to Romantic thematics.

[305] See below Ch. 5.3 and 7.3.

Chapter 3.1.2, a sort of *anagnorisis*, because the reader starts to interpret the narrated world retrospectively after having read it. It reveals the historical identity of Rebecca Lee at the same time as it paradoxically denies it: the epilogue announces that Rebecca Lee is the mother of Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers, but in the same breath assures that the depiction of Rebecca in the novel has nothing to do with her real biography. Yet the epilogue encourages a comparison of the religious ideas, lifestyle and sentiments of the Shakers with the ideas of Mr Bartholomew and Rebecca Lee.

The similarities are clear. Katherine Tarbox has convincingly shown that Mr Bartholomew's idea about the divine cipher (Kepler) or golden section (the Greeks) represents the idea of orderliness and unity of all nature that the Shakers spoke of. Moreover, several matters in Rebecca's speech, visions and behaviour are reminders of Shakers' conceptions. These include the ideas of the feminine and masculine sides of God, of the changing and continuous nature of divine announcement, of the perfect "socialism" of the Shakers, of the will to resist all external power, of the limitless language coined by the Shakers, and of the unity of all time.[306]

The epilogue also emphasises that the novel is the tribute paid by an atheist author to religious reforming zeal, and not praise for religious fundamentalism as such. As the epilogue calls attention to the history and doctrine of the Shakers, it suggests that the novel should be read as a fictional treatise of the social and cultural historical situation that gave birth to this particular sect, as well as later, at the end of the century, to the age of Romanticism. Because fiction, also historical fiction, can be considered more philosophical than history,[307] Fowles's novel could even be read as a treatise of the kind of historical atmosphere and social conditions that produce resistance to power and alternative life-style movements throughout the history of Western societies.

[306] Tarbox 1988, 158-168; See below Ch. 4.3 the idea of horizontal history.

[307] See above Ch. 3.1.

3.6.4 The Endings of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the Unexhausted Virtuality of Hypertext Fiction

> Some new computer programs claim to build creativity by telling half-stories that then must be completed—creatively, creatively!—by the squatter in front of the screen. No doubt I should resist mocking 'em without trying 'em, but can one not predict that for most "active" participants boredom lurks just around the next turn of the plot?[308]

> [I]t is possible to distinguish between the free interpretative choices elicited by a purposeful strategy of openness and the freedom taken by a reader with a text assumed as a mere stimulus.[309]

The French Lieutenant's Woman has recently been seen as the predecessor to interactive hypertext fiction.[310] This estimation is done on the basis that the novel offers three alternative endings and thus includes as many different storylines. This innovative generic categorisation of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as pre-hypertext is a good example of the constant change that occurs in the systems of genres and literary classifications. However, the discussion seems to merit some further comment and theoretical consideration.

First, the estimations of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as pre-hypertext would be historically more accurate if the novel would be read against the history of the convention of open endings. The theorists of hypertextuality have not referred to the fact that Fowles is actually applying a Victorian convention of alternative stories and endings in his novel. Indeed, the endings of the novel are part of the overall mimicry of the Victorian novel, a point that I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 5. Of course, Victorian novels included habitually closed endings, and often these endings were based on an improbable sequence of

[308] Booth 1988, 63.

[309] Eco 1981, 40.

[310] Douglas 2000, 24, 59, 93.

events.[311] However, James Antony Froude's *The Lieutenant's Daughter* (1847), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878) offer alternative stories and endings.[312] Thus, to be exact, the predecessors of hypertextual narratives should be looked for from more distant history than the second half of the twentieth century.

Second, while estimating the endings of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and their relationship to the multiplicity of different storylines of hypertexts, attention should be given also to the semantic interplay of the different endings. In the case of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, each ending is thematically motivated as they offer a point of comparison for each other. I agree with the interpretations claiming that the two first endings represent different types of Victorian endings and the last a more modern one.[313] This kind of postmodernist stylistic and semiotic double-codedness creates a tension between these endings and induces the reader to make a comparison between Victorian and modern conventions of endings within a single text. In particular, it thematises the question of individual freedom and power in several ways, and can be seen as part of the theme of indeterminacy. Indeed, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the different endings seem to summarise specific thematic and poetic ideas. Peter Conradi notes that the alternative narrative patterns of Victorian fiction seem to be only exceptions to a general rule, "the careless product of radical epistemological and aesthetic confidence." Instead, the experiment with the endings in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is "the child […] of a neo-Platonic formal desperation."[314] In other words, the play with different endings in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* epitomises the early postmodernist problematic of artistic form and representation, the relativist view of literary and historical mimesis.

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[311] Cf. Huffaker 1980, 107.

[312] Conradi 1982, 71.

[313] The endings have generated, of course, a lot of critical discussion. For some interpretations, see e.g. Gallop 1991, Osland 1993 and Smith, 1999.

[314] Ibid.

In more theoretical terms, there are important connections between the thematic level and the experimental generic form of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. This notion agrees with Umberto Eco's idea that "in a 'well-made' literary work (as well as in every work of art), there is no openness at a given level which is not sustained and improved by analogous operations at all other levels."[315] In other words, there is a meaningful reciprocity between the levels of semantic disclosures and narrative decisions in an open text like *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Therefore, the "unexhausted virtuality" of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the considered result of the fact that these texts are "planned to invite their Model Readers to reproduce their own processes of deconstruction by a plurality of free interpretative choices."[316]

In fact, I believe that hypertexts are bound to the same rule of human communication as every other literary text (as well as every work of art) that certain texts become more significant just because they are open to *substantial* readings and interpretations. In other words, the artistic significance of a hypertext is the result of it not being mere "closed text" that is "a museum of *déjà vu*, a recital of overcoded literary commonplaces."[317] At its best, therefore, radical openness and other new possibilities of narration are motivated in hypertexts, as they are in their predecessor *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, by the purposeful effort to create thematic and semantic richness, and not just because the reader can repeatedly return to look for the end of at least practically infinite narrative.[318]

Finally, it must be acknowledged that *A Maggot* also conducts a radical experiment with different storylines. This experiment can be regarded as even bolder than the one of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as the different

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[315] Eco 1981, 39.

[316] Ibid., 40.

[317] Ibid., 39.

[318] Cf. Douglas 2000, 120-121. Even if many hypertext narratives do not "end" in the conventional sense, the motivating force for the reader is still the desire for an end, a desire defined by psychologically inclined literary scholars like Peter Brooks (ibid., 121).

alternative stories of the mysterious disappearance of Mr Bartholomew and the unresolvable crime lead to radical ambiguity. I shall return to this question in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 4: ROMANCING HISTORY

> What the romancer is after is intensity and mystery [...].[319]

John Fowles has been called a romancer at least from the early 1970s on. For example, in an article from 1973 Ronald Binns calls him a "radical romancer" and Peter Conradi in his monograph from 1982 a "modern romancer."[320] Nevertheless, it is Simon Loveday's treatise *The Romances of John Fowles* from 1985 that systematically analyses the romance as the primary generic mode of Fowles's fiction. Loveday's analysis of Fowles's novels as romances, based on Northrop Frye's theory of the genre, has been widely accepted in later research and is still valid in many ways.[321]

However, the following chapter aims to extend the discussion of the use of romance in Fowles's fiction with particular reference to *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. It concentrates on analysing those poetic features that are

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[319] Loveday 1985, 9.

[320] Binns 1973, Conradi 1982.

[321] For instance, Serpil Oppermann (1988) borrows many of Loveday's ideas whilst dealing predominantly with the metafictionality and postmodernity of Fowles's fiction.

not discussed in Loveday's monograph or other analyses of Fowles's fiction. In particular, it focuses on the relation and interplay between postmodernist poetics and the romance pattern of the two novels.[322]

First, the chapter argues that every effort to reduce Fowles's novels either in the realistic mode or romance form is methodologically questionable. Such efforts seem in general to have resulted from the persistent idea that romance and the novel are binary opposites and mutually exclusive generic forms, an idea that has dominated literary criticism from at least the seventeenth century onwards.[323] Currently many theorists and literary historians acknowledge that the romance pattern has become mingled with novelistic narratives during the history of English literature in many ways, either overtly or more covertly. Moreover, this mixture and interplay has a significant function in postmodernist historical novels. My aim is to show that Fowles's historical fictions return to the "great tradition" of English literary realism, and that this paradoxical return takes place in his novels despite, and precisely because of, their postmodernist features and their innovative use of the romance pattern.

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[322] Because Fowles's novels are both postmodernist and romances, I call them accordingly "postmodernist romances" in my Licentiate thesis (Brax 1996). It should be noted, moreover, that Fowles's use of the romance pattern in his fiction does not make them *elegiac romances*, that is, participants in the subgenre defined relatively recently by Kenneth A. Bruffee (1983). According to Bruffee, in an elegiac romance a narrator (an observer-character) tells a story of another, more active and seemingly more interesting and heroic character, and what happens to the observer-character when he or she tells the tale governs the central action of the novel. For example, Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947) and Nabokov's *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941) belong to this subgenre, but *Le grand Meaulnes*, a novel by Henry Alain-Fournier that in several ways serves as a model and inspiration for Fowles's romances, do not. It is clear that Fowles's romances do not meet the requirements of this kind of narrative, and mainly because the central action *is not* what happens to the narrator as it is in elegiac romances proper. (Cf. Bruffee 1983, 26-29 and passim.)

[323] See Davis 1983, 34 and passim.

Second, the chapter examines the way *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* both rewrite *The Tempest*. The focus is especially on the "fiction within fiction" structure of these two novels that, in the context of Fowles's fiction, derive from this particular play by Shakespeare. Of course, this famous topos of romances can be found in *Le grand Meaulnes* (1913) too, a novel by Henri Alain-Fournier, commonly regarded as a generic subtext for Fowles's several novels. Moreover, this literary topos seems to belong to the repertoire of romance in general. However, my main interest is in the relation between Fowles's novels and *The Tempest* since this intertextual aspect has not been studied in detail before, and because it has lately been noted that, for various reasons, postmodernist literature flaunts this subtext.

Third, the chapter aims to define the nature of the moments of revelation depicted in Fowles's fiction and to estimate what functions and ethical aims they serve. The underlying assumption is that rather than conforming easily to a modernist notion of epiphany, the moments of revelation depicted seem to unite features from different literary, religious and philosophical traditions. Moreover, the perspective of postmodernist poetics proves to be vital in defining their characteristics.

4.1 Postmodernist Historical Romance and the Question of Realism

One of the taxonomic problems Fowles criticism has confronted from early on is how to define his fiction relative to the traditions of realism and romance. Simon Loveday shed new light on the question in 1985 when he convincingly argued that realism is not the most essential enterprise of Fowles's fiction but an elaboration of the romance form.[324] However, Loveday is at odds with Fowles's opinions about the direction the English novel should take. At an early stage of his career Fowles stated that the novel should return to realism: "We need a

[324] Loveday 1985, 145.

return to the great tradition of the English novel–Realism."[325] In the same interview he also emphasises the social and political responsibility of the artist. Surprised by these statements, Loveday marvels at why Fowles has wanted to hide and conceal the fundamental substance of his talent.[326]

It is of course difficult to consider Fowles's novels as pure realistic fictions. However, more rewarding for an understanding of the generic character of Fowles's fiction and its relationship with literary realism are the remarks made by Ulrich Broich in 1990. In his analysis of *The Ebony Tower*, he argues that its short stories are not peculiarly radical in literary form. He illustrates his opinion with an analysis of 'The Enigma,' and claims that it does not break with the conventions of detective fiction as radically as some other postmodernist fictions. According to Broich, 'The Enigma' unites two traditions in short prose fiction, namely those of social realism and the aesthetic-experimental. Broich argues that this union makes the narrative a typical representative of contemporary British fiction and short stories.[327] Broich's argument is interesting since it is a move towards a wider understanding of Fowles's fiction. It escapes the problems earlier research had in trying to fit them into a single dominant generic frame, since Broich perceives the synthetic nature of Fowles's literary works. Broich's view is reminiscent of the main idea of the present study that Fowles's novels are postmodernist genre-hybrids, i.e. consciously and radically eclectic in their utilisation of literary tradition.

Indeed, any binary categorisation of Fowles's fictions either as realistic or romances seems to lead to serious difficulties. On the one hand, Fowles's idea about the necessary return to the tradition of realism seems to come true in his work, even if in a characteristic and paradoxical way. As his novels repeatedly verify, Fowles appreciates the evocation of the reality effect through good stories and rich character description. Thus, they share several stylistic features with the

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[325] Quoted in Loveday 1985, 145. The term *great tradition* refers to the famous elevation of English realistic literature, *The Great Tradition* (1960) by F. R. Leavis.

[326] Ibid.

[327] Broich 1990, 186-187.

English realistic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[328] Moreover, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is, as is commonly known, a pastiche (even if ironic and thus a parody), of the Victorian novel, and *A Maggot* imitates some of the literary conventions of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, the return to realism is not just innocent adaptation of realistic poetics but also its critical examination. This examination happens from within realistic aesthetics as the novel not only evokes but also flouts the realist conventions, and juxtaposes problematically different generic modes, for example, the realistic novel with romance and the fantastic. In other words, Fowles's novels are both realistic fictions but also something else; they are also contemporary, postmodernist double-coded novels, experimental, self-reflexive, linking together several different modes of writing and calling into question the literary and ideological endeavours of their predecessors.

To better understand the poetic qualities of Fowles's fiction and their critical dialogue with generic traditions, let us briefly examine the history of theoretical approaches to the relationship between the realistic novel and the romance. The deep-seated view of the polarity between romance and the novel ruled out the possibility of the simultaneous existence of the conventions of them both. The English author Clara Reeve made the distinction between these two genres in 1785, and it has had a long-standing influence on Anglo-Saxon genre theory ever since. For example, René Wellek and Austin Warren still accepted the distinction in their *Theory of Literature* (1942) without hesitation:

> The two chief modes of narrative fiction have, in English, been called the "romance" and the "novel." […] The novel is realistic; the romance is poetic or epic: we should call it "mythic." Mrs. Radcliffe, Sir Walter Scott,

[328] Marguerite Alexander notes accordingly: "Fowles has considerable gifts for narrative and description, and in another age – the nineteenth century, say, the setting for *The French Lieutenant's Woman* – would have been able to use them without self-consciousness […]." She argues that Fowles's novels differ in this respect from those of Thomas Pynchon, which do not make use of the conventions of realism to the same degree. (Alexander 1990, 127).

> Hawthorne are writers of "romance." Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, Anthony Trollope, George Gissing are novelists. *The two types, which are polar*, indicate the double descent of prose narrative: the novel develops from the lineage of non-fictitious narrative forms–the letter, the journal, the memoir or biography, the chronicle or history […]. The romance, on the other hand, the continuator of the epic and the medieval romance, may neglect verisimilitude of detail […] addressing itself to a higher reality, a deeper psychology. [329]

Although this definition aptly depicts the qualities of romance and the realistic novel, it is hard to put the distinction into practice while dealing with a particular author or text. One might ask, for instance, whether the fictions of Scott are simply pure romances? It seems true that even his most realistic narratives such as *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) utilise the romance pattern. However, the novel opens with a historical chronicle about the lynching of captain Porteus during the 1736-mob riot of Edinburgh. Even those of Scott's novels set in the Middle Ages have qualities that prevent them being considered as pure romances. *Ivanhoe* (1820) has been regarded as one of the first attempts to write an authentic novel about the Middle Ages. Georg Lukács appreciated the very realism of *Ivanhoe*, for example, the fact that it cleverly depicts the effect of an important historical change on daily life.[330]

Indeed, Georg Lukács does not argue any more that there would be a clear polarity between the realistic novel and romance, but instead approaches the question in terms of the historical battle the realist novel wages within its tradition against reactionary Romanticism and the romance form. Accordingly, he argues that Scott's novels expressly strive for realism, a struggle that has been said to find its culmination later in the novels of George Eliot. Lukács claims that although Scott's novels are founded on the epic form, they express a profound

[329] Wellek and Warren 1942, 223-224 (emphasis added).

[330] Lukács 1989, 49.

human and historical truth.[331] According to Lukács, Scott won the battle against "reactionary" Romanticism at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while, say, the historical novels of Victor Hugo are subjective and moralistic descriptions of the past.[332] In sum, Lukács argues that Scott's novels succeed in hiding their romance substance behind the realistic conventions in their fight against Romanticism, even though they originate from the romance tradition and from the interest in history that the gothic novel had given rise to.

Current theoretical notions of the relationship between the romance and realism suggest that romance has in fact accompanied realistic literature and the historical novel since their birth. Thus it seems that it was really an optical illusion of much old Anglo-Saxon literary theory that it sought to portray romance as the polar opposite of the realistic novel. As Laurie Langbauer has observed, literary theorists have recurrently made efforts to define the novel as a literary genre in comparison with the romance, and tautologically the other way round. This has led to a historical view about the origin of the novel that "seems to point […] to the way meanings are produced within a system of terms rather than resting on some bedrock outside that system."[333]

Northrop Frye has advanced an influential theoretical notion that has made us reconsider the relationship between romance and realism (as well as between other genres and modes). He acknowledged the possibility of combining romance and realism in a single work in his *The Anatomy of Criticism* and *The Secular*

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[331] Ibid., 56.

[332] Lukács's criteria are, though, strongly ideological. For him, there is only one correct interpretation of history, the Marxist one. It is not difficult to see that his ideas are in conflict with Hayden White's philosophical notion that historiography is always an interpretation and includes poetic qualities (see above 2.2.1). Lukács too is himself guilty of a Romantic attitude towards history. Lukács appreciates that Scott did not make his characters Carlylean heroes. Nevertheless, Lukács himself displays a Romantic attitude towards history as he wants to see Jeanie Deans as a heroic romantic woman of the people. Jeanie represents for Lukács heroism that is met among ordinary people and that finally leads to a glorious revolution (1989, 52-53).

[333] Langbauer 1990, 17.

Scripture.[334] For Frye, romance is one of the four *mythos*, i.e. one of the archetypal and elementary literary plots. For this reason, it can be coupled with different historical genres in various ways. Thus, romance exists in the nineteenth-century European literature together with the realistic literary conventions.[335]

This notion of the possible appearance of these different genres or modes within a single work has been suggested since then by several other critics and theorists. For instance, Gillian Beer openly refers to the fact that the old critical distinction between realism and romance was doomed to remain almost purely theoretical:

> The critical argument between the claims of 'realism' and 'romance' in the later nineteenth century exaggerated the contrast between the two modes and its attempt to establish them as separate categories was bound to fail for all but a very few works.[336]

Drawing on post-structuralist theories of genre and narrative, and using George Eliot's novels as examples, Diane Elam and Laurie Langbauer argue that romance has parasitically appeared in the realist novel. Elam criticises the "simple opposition of real(ist) history to romance."[337] She wonder what is "romance doing in the quintessentially 'realistic' novels of George Eliot" and argues, consequently, that

[334] See Frye 1957 and 1976.

[335] Frye is certainly correct in insisting that literary genres do not always appear pure and unaccompanied, even if his genre theory has been criticised for inconsistencies (see e.g. Todorov 1975, 8-19, Scholes 1974, 118-127 and Brooke-Rose 1983, 55-61).

[336] Beer 1970, 74.

[337] Elam 1992, 54.

> [e]xcess is in the nature of the genre: romance returns even at the point where it is most violently excluded in the name of realism, making even a clear distinction between realism and romance impossible.[338]

In similar terms, Laurie Langbauer asserts the following:

> Yet, as for other novelists, Eliot's realism cannot keep separate from what it casts as its opposite. In *The Mill on the Floss*, describing Maggie "battling with the old shadowy enemies that were forever slain and rising again" […], Eliot describes too the struggle between the realism of her novels and an undispatchable romance within them. […] Eliot means for her dominant mode of presentation to ensure the primacy of her genre, the novel, but romance is a shadowy enemy, always rising again, because, in fighting it, realism is fighting its own shadow. [339]

Thus, the novel seems habitually to call up what has been seen as its other, the romance. If this is true, it seems clear that the genre analysis of postmodernist fictions should be directed towards an evaluation of the interplay between the romance narrative pattern and the other literary conventions, considering their functional reciprocity, and the effects this has on interpretation. Only through such extended critical operation can the particularity and distinction of postmodernist romances be obtained.

In Fowles's fiction the overt elevation of the romance pattern is closely connected to the questioning and re-evaluation of the poetic and political principles of realism. Contrary to Scott's novels that tried to hide their romance essence, Fowles's novels deliberately bring into question the realist conventions: they violate the realist expectations of the reader through metafictional structures, genre parody and anomalous modes of writing comprising mythical, fantastic and gothic elements. Thus, they express the inherent incompatibility of the historical

[338] Ibid., 7.

[339] Langbauer 1990, 200-201.

novel: it appears that the historical novel has never been able to completely free itself from romance and Romanticism. More importantly, romance functions thematically in Fowles's historical fiction as the transgressor of the "official" truth, the one-eyed realism, i.e. as the proposer of an alternative realism still existing only in the imagination.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the use of the romance pattern seems to be part of the return to the realistic conventions of Victorian fiction, at least as it appears in George Eliot's novels. The novel studies the Victorian Romantic imagination, and particularly it examines the characteristics of Charles Smithson's Romantic quest for authentic love, a quest whereby Sarah Woodruff seduces Charles with her imaginative story and fictional identity. An important aspect of this study of the Victorian Romantic imagination is that, as a reader of romances, Sarah Woodruff resembles several Victorian and other literary characters who fancy an alternative life for themselves. The novel rewrites the Victorian convention of the woman's desire for an alternative reality that the reading of romances and other literature creates but that time cannot satisfy, as shall be shown below in more detail. The multiple endings of the novel contrast different possible outcomes of this Romantic quest for an alternative reality and identity, two conventional and one more modern, and their ethical dimensions. As there is still one more ending after the second, conventional, "happy ending," the novel seems to suggest that even if Victorian Romantic desire were satisfied, even then it has its limits; it still bears the marks of male fantasy and is therefore more Charles's than Sarah's own narrative.

In *A Maggot* the tension between the romance pattern and the realistic historical representation is fully realised. As the storyline of *A Maggot* turns from the realistic historical adventure towards the mythical, fantastic and miraculous it certainly enters a romance style reminiscent of Homer, Shakespeare or Chrétien de Troyes rather than Scott. However, the play with the reader's realistic expectations and their destruction, the deliberate tension between realistic and unrealistic modes of writing, is something that does not characterise earlier romances. Interestingly, even the unrealistic passages of *A Maggot* can be read

alternatively as representations of the imagination typical of the times. The allusions to sf (or, if one wishes, to scientific romance) in Rebecca's testimony, for instance, can also be interpreted as representations of the religious imagination of a daughter of an eighteenth-century Quaker family.[340] Thus, through these kinds of double-coded discourses that create simultaneously the feeling of the real and of the unreal, the novel evokes both a sense of the past and of something that is strange and foreign for the period and, moreover, for realistic historical representation. Interestingly, then, the novel is capable of both making a claim about the past and its cultural condition and of exceeding the limits of the realistic conventions through the elaboration of the romance form.

The violation of the realistic frame through the romance compels the reader of *A Maggot* to pay more attention to the past and to the past as represented, as a construction and as a form of textuality. That is, while *A Maggot* calls historical representation into question through the double-coded discourse it reveals the artificiality of realistic historical representation and, thus, makes history strange for the reader. Thus *A Maggot* seems to conform to the idea put forward by Diane Elam that when realistic literature helps us come to terms with history so that it can be conveniently forgotten, the postmodernist romance makes the forgetting difficult:

> [W]hile realism remembers the past so as to forget it, the postmodern romance re-members the past, re-situates its temporality, in order to make the past impossible to forget.[341]

Thus realism and realistic representation can be considered as forms of wiping the past from memory. Elam refers here to the idea originally put forward by Theodor Adorno.[342] Like Adorno, Lyotard also claims that representing could be, however paradoxical as it may sound, a deterrent against remembering. He argues

[340] See Ch. 6.2.

[341] Elam 1992, 15.

[342] See Adorno 1986, 115.

that to represent, to inscribe something in memory, in fact initiates the process of forgetting. Instead, the unrepresentability of history renders it sublime. For example, the Holocaust should, according to Lyotard, continue ultimately to be an unrepresentable historical event so that it would never be forgotten.[343] Given these ideas, it seems understandable that historical fiction has had to be renewed: nostalgic and totalitarian realism does not correspond to the postmodern sensibility. So, the way *A Maggot* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* combine the conventions of romance and the realistic novel requires from the reader, in Adorno's terms, "a serious working through of the past" (*Aufarbeitung*) that the effort made by realistic representations to come to terms with history does not support.[344] In sum, by the means of generic heterogeneity, together with the other forms of the poetics of mystery, Fowles's novels simultaneously point out that full, determinate knowledge of the past is impossible, and perhaps not even desired, and make the past unforgettable.

4.2 Fiction within Fiction: Variations on The Tempest

The romance appears in various forms in Fowles's fiction. Starting with his first work *The Collector*, Fowles regularly utilises the romance pattern as the basic structure of his prose fiction. There are also several allusions to different romances in his texts, and some of the texts also have a certain classical romance as their subtext. In particular, his texts contain several points of contacts with medieval and Shakespearean romances.

The medieval quest narrative is one of the basic generic patterns and a source of parody in Fowles's fiction. In *The Collector*, already the epigraph "que fors aus ne le sot riens nee," a citation from the thirteenth-century French lyrical romance *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, suggests this connection and sets an anachronistic medieval

[343] Lyotard 1990, 26.

[344] Adorno 1986, 115.

tone for the whole novel.[345] *Eliduc*, a vernacular medieval lay by Marie de France, *Yvain*, a medieval chivalric romance by Chrétien de Troyes, and the legend of Tristan and Isolde are examples of the medieval quest narrative subtexts of *The Ebony Tower*.[346]

For present purposes, it is most interesting that the narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* hints that the Victorian gentleman is a reincarnation of the medieval *preux chevalier*:

> We can trace the Victorian gentleman's best qualities back to the parfit knights and *preux chevaliers* of the Middle Ages; and trace them forward into the modern gentleman, that breed we call scientists, since that is where the river has undoubtedly run. In other words, every culture, however undemocratic, or however egalitarian, needs a kind of self-questioning, ethical elite, and one that is bound by certain rules of conduct, some of which may be very unethical, and so account for the eventual death of the form, though their hidden purpose is good: to brace or act as structure for the better effects of their function in history.[347]

Thus, the novel alludes to medieval chivalric culture so as to suggest that a parallel should be drawn between Charles Smithson and the male hero of medieval culture and imagination. From this, the argument is broadened to cover the whole human history as the narrator suggests that every age needs its own ethical elite which goes through with its ordeals and self-denials like Christ in the Wilderness.[348] What links up a medieval knight, the gentleman of the Victorian epoch and the scientist of 1976 is, according to the narrator, that

[345] Loveday translates this sentence "no one but them knew about it" (1985, 13).

[346] See e.g. Brax 1992, 7-17.

[347] *FLW*, 256.

[348] *FLW*, 256-257.

> they all rejected or reject the notion of *possession* as the purpose of life, whether it be of a woman's body, or of high profit at all costs, or of the right to dictate the speed of progress.[349]

This paradigmatic schema suggests sameness in difference, a kind of archetypal character of human existence, and the horizontality of history as opposed to the idea of gradual evolution in history.[350] As all these people of different historical eras are seen to go through a similar kind of ordeal in life, the passage suggests also the archetypal nature of the romance pattern. In other words, it is suggested that the life of Jesus, of the medieval knight, of the Victorian gentleman or of the contemporary scientist follows the similar pattern of a quest narrative. Moreover, in the quotation we encounter again the theme of indeterminacy in the form of resistance against any form of possession or historical teleology. Yet the representation of Charles Smithson as a knight is ironic as the novel later questions the Romantic ideals of Charles's Victorian quest for saving his damsel in distress and reveals that these ideals too have been part of an effort to possess Sarah through the Victorian male Romantic imagination.[351]

Another point of interest, and the question I shall concentrate on in the following, is the generic similarities between Shakespeare's late romance and comedy *The Tempest* (1611-1612) and Fowles's fiction.[352] Fowles's fictions get in touch with this famous Elizabethan drama in several ways, and a broader perspective of critical examination will make the case clearer. I shall also refer to

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[349] Ibid., 257 (emphasis in the original).

[350] See below 4.3.

[351] This fact is revealed for Charles in a series of disillusions. First he suspects that his "Guinevere" has actually been a whore (*FLW*, 205) and only later, as Hutcheon has remarked, recognises that imagination ("fiction-making") could be also "a freedom-inducing act, not an act of possession" (1980, 64).

[352] During the renaissance the romance was a famous form of dramatic literature. Besides the Elizabethan Shakespeare, other noticable English renaissance writers who wrote romances were Sir Philip Sidney (*Arcadia*, 1590, 1593, 1598), Edmund Spenser (*The Fairie Queene*, 1590-1596) and John Lyly (*Euphues*, 1578, 1580).

some other examples within Fowles's fiction, especially *The Magus*, although, in view of the starting point of this study, I am particularly interested in analysing the link between Shakespeare's play, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. Moreover, my emphasis thorughout is on the romance pattern of these texts.

As Chantal Zabus notes, Shakespeare's play has been parodied and rewritten during its nearly four centuries of existence by numerous authors, like Dryden-Davenant, Browning, Renan, Wilde and Auden. Zabus surveys the contemporary rewritings of the play, and shows that these can be roughly divided into three groups according to their different agenda: to postcolonial, postmodernist and feminist adaptations.[353] As regards the postmodernist rewritings, her examples are Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991), Irish Murdoch's *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), and, as you may guess, Fowles's *The Collector* and *The Magus*.[354]

Indeed, the allusions to the *Tempest* in these last two novels are clear. An obvious connection to *The Tempest* is created in *The Collector* through the allusive names of the novel's protagonists, Miranda and Ferdinand. Similarly, the mysterious millionaire of *The Magus*, Maurice Conchis, unmistakably calls to mind Prospero; the narrator even refers to Maurice Conchis by saying that "Prospero will show you his domaine."[355] I shall not here probe into the way *The Collector* rewrites Shakespeare's play, as this text is not of primary interest in this study. However, I shall survey *The Magus* in more detail in order to give a clear picture of the general and particular but less overt romance patterns in Fowles's two historical fictions.

In general, there are many points of contact with Shakespeare's play and *The Magus*. First, the scene for the imaginary events is an island far apart from the rest of civilisation. Second, a man of power, a magician or a millionaire, who produces a play that has real people as characters, rules an island. Third, the

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[353] Zabus 1994, 114-115 and passim. See also Steven Connor's analysis of Marina Warner's rewiting of the play, *Indigo* (1992) (Connor 1996, 186-198).

[354] Cf. Alexander 1990, 167-199.

[355] *Ms*, 83.

reader or spectator simultaneously follows two plays or narrative fictions, the author's and the one built by the character (Prospero, Conchis). Fourth, both *The Tempest* and *The Magus* are constructed on the oscillation between illusion and disillusion.[356]

It is of special interest here that both *The Magus* and *The Tempest* are governed by the archetypal structure of the romance. According to Northrop Frye, the three facets of a romance are quest, ordeal and vision. This archetypal pattern of a romance and its heuristic plot is characteristic not only of Shakespeare's romances but also, for example, for medieval chivalric romances. The following schema, proposed by Frye,[357] shows how this basic structure is manifest in *The Tempest*:

[356] Cf. Conradi 1982, 50-51.

[357] See Frye 1986, 178.

Character	**Quest**	**Ordeal**	**Vision**
Ferdinand	search for father	log bearing	masque
(a) Gonzalo	(a and b) search for	(a and b) "forthrights	(a) commonwealth
(b) "three men of sin"	Alonso's son	and meanders"	(b) harpy banquet
(a) Caliban	(a and b) search for	(a and b) horsepond	(a) dream of music
(b) Stephano Trinculo	Prospero		(b) "trumpery"
Boatswain and crew		imprisonment and noise	renewed ship

Nicholas Urfe experiences these facets of quest narrative in *The Magus*. He is in *quest* of an authentic selfhood and a sense of direction in life, gets into an *ordeal* that tests his courage and morals, gets involved in a strange *masque* or God-game, and experiences fantastic visions within.[358]

Nevertheless, it is the fact that both *The Magus* and *The Tempest* are so thoroughly constructed on the dramatic structure of "the play within a play" that interest me the most in this context and in the following discussion on the other two novels by John Fowles. It is essential to note that both in Shakespeare and

[358] On the characteristics of the visions, see below Ch. 4.3 and Ch. 6 (passim).

Fowles's romances the fiction within fiction is meant as a sort of heuristic and moral process for the characters taking part, as well as for the audience or reader.

And of course the structure of the play within a play appears in several of other Shakespeare's plays, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96), *Hamlet* (1600-01), *Measure for Measure* (1604-05) and *The Winter's Tale* (1610-11). Nevertheless, according to Northrop Frye, *The Tempest* is exceptional within these plays since in it the play and the play within the play combine, and thus, the spectators watch simultaneously two plays, those of Shakespeare and Prospero.[359] That is, the act of producing a play is the central subject of *The Tempest*:

> The principle I've mentioned so often, that the theatre itself is the central character in Shakespeare, is at its most concentrated here [in *The Tempest*]: the subject of this play is the producing of a play, which, like the second half of *Measure for Measure*, is put on by the chief character with what within his convention are real people.[360]

In a similar way, *The Magus* is built on an all-inclusive structure of play within a play (or, to be more exact, a play within a novel). Maurice Conchis, the Prospero figure of the novel, produces a play in the Greek island Phraxos, and the main character Nicholas Urfe is ignorant of his participation in the play.

As regards *A Maggot*, it seems clear that it is built again on the paradigmatic and archetypal pattern of a romance with its quest motif and voyage to the nature beyond civilisation. As in many romances, including *The Tempest*, nature is the place of mysterious events and contemplative experiences. Rebecca Lee and Mr Ayscough both go through an ordeal, even if with contradictory results: the former gains better self-esteem, but the latter does not come off as a winner, as he seems to stick to his old, ethically questionable values of life. In the novel, nature

[359] Frye 1986, 12.

[360] Ibid., 172.

is also the place where the characters encounter a variety of heavenly or infernal visions or revelations.[361]

Moreover, *A Maggot* resembles *The Tempest* with its all-inclusive structure of fiction within fiction. Mr Bartholomew, the Prospero figure of the novel, produces a play within the world of the story that has, again, real people as characters. This time the characters are professional or amateur actors who are paid for acting outside the theatre, among real people, and without really knowing the manuscript of the play. Extraordinary in this arrangement is that it seems difficult to tell where the game really ends and where the line between the play and reality goes. Are the actors caught in a play that goes beyond their comprehension, or are they still acting at the evidentiary hearings? The reader is disposed to believe that they speak the truth, or more accurately, express their biased interpretation of what really happened, since they are under oath and the game seems to take a free course following the disappearance of the scriptwriter and director, Mr Bartholomew.

Unlike *The Tempest*, or any other Renaissance romance, *A Maggot* carries the poetic legacy of realist historical fiction and, thus, makes the reader ponder on the possible rationalist explanation for the miraculous events. In other words, as the novel by turns enters into the mythical and fantastic world of romance and takes the reader back to rational enquiry through Mr Ayscough's sceptical hearing of the witnesses, *A Maggot* plays with the realist expectations of the modern reader, only to finally frustrate them. Thus it creates an ontological hesitation in the reader. Because of the effect of hesitation, it seems clear that this textual quality is inherited rather from the nineteenth century fantastic literature than from the convention of dreaminess of the Renaissance romance.[362]

The connection between *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Tempest* is less obvious, but nevertheless, still exists, as they both elaborate not only the romance pattern but also the convention of the play within a play. In the novel,

[361] See below Ch. 4.3. and Ch. 6.

[362] See below Ch. 6.

Sarah Woodruff is a kind of Prospero figure as she has the power to produce a play that also has real people as characters. Of course, the fact that Sarah falsely lets the people of Lyme Regis believe that she has lost her virginity to the French Lieutenant could be regarded as a peculiar type of deception, or rather, following Dr Grogan's line of rational psychological reasoning, as a consequence of her melancholic disposition. Yet the pattern gains meaning through the recognition that the novel, as a whole, thematises the question of power and imagination and that it utilises the poetic conventions of the romance and the play within a play to carry it out.

Interestingly, Sarah's imaginative activity takes place within a realistic frame, and as such, it radically differs from *The Tempest*, where Prospero has great magical powers at his disposal. Thus, the novel does not radically break with the realist conventions in its effort to probe the nature, power and possibilities of imagination. Consequently, its use of the romance and the play within a play patterns seems to be in accordance with the conventions of Victorian realist fiction (of which it is a pastiche) thus reminding us of the way realist fiction aimed at subordinating the most anomalous traits of romance beneath the realist conventions. In other words, its use of these poetic or generic patterns evokes a more subtle interchange of illusion and disillusion than the plots of *The Tempest* or *A Maggot*. The story within a story is aimed at making Charles aware of the illusory nature of his romantic imagination and, ultimately, as we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, of the existentialist assumption that existence precedes essence.

4.3 The Moment of Revelation in John Fowles's Fiction: Epiphanies, Theophanies or Visions of a Quest Romance?

> **Epiphany** means "a manifestation," and by Christian thinkers was used to signify a manifestation of God's presence in the world. In

> the early draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, entitled *Stephen Hero* (published posthumously in 1944), James Joyce adapted the term to secular experience, to signify a sense of sudden radiance and revelation while observing a commonplace object. "By an epiphany [Stephen] meant a sudden spiritual manifestation."[363]

> Traditional inspiration tends to be theophanic, not epiphanic. […] Traditional inspiration claims that a specific theological entity is contained in the experience it records. […] Theophanies, like earlier forms of epiphany, record appearances of God, while epiphanies record the mind caught in the act of valuing particularly vivid images. […] The biblical prophets, Augustine, and the Puritan divines always attribute their inspiration to a specifically named manifestation of divinity: God, Christ, the Holy Ghost.[364]

This chapter aims to describe the nature of the visions portrayed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. In other words, I shall make an effort to determine whether the visions depicted in these novels are epiphanies, theophanies or similar to the phantasms found, for instance, in medieval chivalric or Elizabethan romances. The question is an integral part of the analysis of the poetics and generic form, especially of the romance structure, of Fowles's historical fiction. I shall concentrate on analysing some passages from *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*, but in order to trace different literary conventions and traditions that work together in his fiction, I will start with an example from *Daniel Martin.*

I shall discuss the nature of the visions of Fowles's fiction within a broader question, the relationships between Romanticist, modernist and postmodernist poetics. It is well known that James Joyce first used the term epiphany in its

[363] Abrams 1971, 52.

[364] Nichols 1987, 29-30.

modern sense.[365] It is interesting then to try to distinguish how the visions of Fowles's novels differ from the intensified moments depicted in Joyce's and other modernist fiction. However, the history of epiphany is seen to have its origin in Romanticism and Wordsworth's secular *spots of time*.[366] I shall start my discussion therefore by comparing the epiphanies of Fowles's fiction and Romantic poetry. Even though it is not possible to draw far-reaching conclusions about the characteristics of the Romantic, modernist and postmodernist poetics solely on the basis of this analysis only, the purpose of the study is to reveal at least some particular conflicting characteristics in the works of fiction representing different period styles, and to offer certain guidelines for the further study of postmodernist fiction. I believe that this chapter will at least give essential, albeit partial, information about the relationship between Fowles's fiction and one of the central aspects of Romantic and modernist poetics.[367]

The following passage from *Daniel Martin* is a description of an epiphany quite similar to those found in Romantic poetry and modernist prose fiction:

> Perhaps those beautiful tomb-walls somewhere inland behind the beach; perhaps the fact that the holiday was near its end; no, something deeper than that, a mysterious unison, and strangely uncarnal, in spite of our naked bodies. I have had very few religious moments in my life. The profound difference between Anthony and myself—and our types of mankind—is that I did for a few moments there feel unaccountably happy; yet I could see that for him, the supposedly religious man, this was no more than a faintly embarrassing midnight jape. Or I can put it like this: he

[365] See the epigraph of this Chapter.

[366] See especially Nichols 1987, passim.

[367] Nichols claims that epiphanies, or "momentary remarks of significance in ordinary experience" have become a defining characteristic of twentieth century fiction (1987,1). To give an example of the popularity of the term, he refers to Jonathan Culler's assertion that one solution to the difficulty in reading poems that do not occupy a central place in human experience is the "attempt to read any brief descriptive lyric as a moment of epiphany" (1975, 175).

> saw me as the brother-in-law he liked, I saw him as the brother I loved. It was a moment that had both an infinity and an evanescence—an intense closeness, yet no more durable than the tiny shimmering organisms in the water around us.
>
> I tried repeatedly in later years to put those few moments into my work—and always had to cut them out. It took me time to discover that even atheists need a sense of blasphemy.[368]

The passage contains many different aspects of an epiphany.[369] First, there is the combination of "infinity and evanescence." Daniel juxtaposes his sudden feeling of infinity with the momentary, glistening aquatic flora around the swimmers, which clearly discloses how his particular experience, and epiphany in general, defies chronological time. Nichols describes this aspect of modernist epiphany as follows:

> Epiphany defies chronological time in favor of a psychological time based on emphasis and vividness, not duration of the clock. It achieves aion, a sense of eternity, when time becomes a function of the mind's ability to achieve peaks of intensity in defiance of chronology.[370]

The distinction Nichols makes between chronological and psychological time is based on Frank Kermode's definition. Kermode adapted the theological words *chronos* and *kairos* for this purpose. According to him, *chronos* is the chronological time, the clock time, and *kairos* is the imaginative time. *Kairos* refers to time as it is conceived in the mind. In other words, it can be seen as a psychologically determined sense of time. *Chronos* is a moment of time gone

[368] *DM*, 126.

[369] I am especially indebted in what follows to Ashton Nichols, whose presentation of the issue in *The Poetics of Epiphany* (1987) is the clearest I have found.

[370] Nichols 1987, 28.

forever when it is passed. By contrast, with *kairos* there is "a possibility for the retention of value through emphasis and memory."[371]

Nevertheless, as the passage from *Daniel Martin* shows, it seems difficult to put an intensified moment into a film. As a film director, Daniel has not succeeded in capturing the intensity and sensitivity of his almost sacred experiment into his dramatisations. However, Daniel tells nothing about literature as an instrument for this purpose. Therefore, the passage refers only to the limitations of a motion picture as a medium of *aion* and *kairos*. As such, the passage can be seen as a part of the novel's critical study of cinematic narration and representation.

Moreover, the passage reveals interestingly that Fowles's fiction upholds a literary tradition of the value of the moment (in Augustine's *Confessions*, *momentum*, and in German writers, *der Augenblick*, or *der Moment*) that was originally generated in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century. German Romantics Schelling, Hölderlin, Goethe and Novalis brought this aspect into literature.[372] The tradition was imported into England by Coleridge and later Carlyle, and some of the writings of Shelley and Keats suggest the same kind of valuing of the ordinary perceptions that turn into "archetypes of everlastingness."[373] As the passage from *Daniel Martin* indicates, Fowles can also be seen as the follower of this originally Romanticist tradition.

Second, Daniel Martin assumes that the natural scene, especially the presence of the tomb-walls inland as seen by the swimmers from the sea, might have caused his spiritual experience. Similarly, the natural setting is one of the central originators of epiphanies in Romantic poetry. According to Novalis, not only certain words, some particular passages in books and the sight of a human form or face but also "many incidents and occurrences in the natural scene" can cause an intense experience.[374] To give another example, Wordsworth's spots of time

[371] Nichols 1987, 24-28. For further discussion on the matter, see Kermode 1967, 35-66.

[372] Abrams 1973, 386-387.

[373] Nichols 1987, 26.

[374] See Abrams 1973, 386-387.

are also effects of nature, experienced mainly in isolation from the rest of civilisation.

In particular, one of the spiritual moments depicted in Wordsworth's *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind* is of great interest for the present purpose: the spot of time that the poet-speaker confronts in a stolen boat far away from the shore. The sight of a mountain originates his epiphany although he becomes aware of the true power of his experience only as time passes.[375] The comparison of the poem and the passage from *Daniel Martin* reveals considerable similarities. The situation in Fowles's novel is in certain respects akin to Wordsworth's poem: both represent the sea by night, the glimpse of tomb-walls or a mountainside, and a sensitive young man experiencing the power of a moment. Therefore, the passage from *Daniel Martin* can be considered as a new variation of this particular Romantic, and specifically Wordsworthian, literary topos.

Third, the passage also presents the idea of an interpenetrating society. Daniel Martin experiences "a mysterious unison" and "an intense closeness" with nature and his friends. Northrop Frye interprets this aspect in Keats' poetry and thought as follows:

> Every soul is at once the center and the circumference of the universe, hence the society the poet is trying to help form is an interpenetrating society, with the macrocosm present in each microcosm: "They intersimulate," as he [Keats] says in an inspired portmanteau word.[376]

In Fowles's novel Daniel seems to meet something like the "fellowship with essence," an experience described in a crucial passage of *Endymion*:

> *Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks*
> *Our ready minds to fellowship divine,*
> *A fellowship with essence; till we shine,*

[375] Wordsworth 1969, 1: 356-400.

[376] Frye 1968, 159.

> *Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold*
> *The clear religion of heaven!*[377]

Keats' poem gives a different kind of formulation for the same sort of feeling of "unaccountable happiness" that Daniel experiences for a few moments in the passage from Fowles's novel. Like the speaker in *Endymion*, Daniel has had a short sight of an interpenetrating world, a momentary feeling of something almost divine. Unlike his friend Anthony, Daniel is a person with a "ready mind" for this kind of Romanticist vision.

Fourth, the mysteriousness of the vision is typical for epiphanies in general. The seemingly profane, but in reality unknown, origin of an epiphany makes it radically different from theophany. Nichols describes the difference as follows:

> In all traditional religious inspiration certain experiences are interpreted as external influences of the divine on the mundane. In the literary epiphany ushered in by the Romantics, this traditional order is reversed; the ordinary is rendered remarkable by an imaginative transformation of experience. The visible reveals *something* invisible, but the status of the invisible component is left unstated. Its mystery becomes part of the value of the experience.[378]

Although David confesses that he is an atheist, he draws a parallel between his experience and a religious moment. He remarks also that it would be blasphemous to interpret the experience in a medium that does not make it possible to attain the real quality of it. However, the passage does not reveal that God or any other supernatural power would be the originator of the experience. Moreover, the allusion to atheism makes the reader consider the experience as

[377] Keats 1908, 77.

[378] Nichols 1987, 21. Northrop Frye hints at the same thing when he says that what was formerly understood rationally through doctrinal and conceptual statements is in Romantic poetry increasingly understood and interpreted imaginatively as what might and could be true (1968, 126, 151).

merely metaphorically religious and divine. Nevertheless, the mystery is a part of the value of David's experience as in Romanticist epiphany.

The following example from *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is not as easy to explain as the previous passage from *Daniel Martin* by reference to conventional ideas of Romanticist and modernist epiphany:

> The master [Charles] went back into his room; and there entered his mind a brief image of that ancient disaster he had found recorded in the blue lias and brought back to Ernestina—the ammonites caught in some recession of water, a micro-catastrophe of ninety million years ago. In a vivid insight, a flash of black lightning, he saw that all life was parallel: that evolution was not vertical, ascending to a perfection, but horizontal. Time was the great fallacy; existence was without history, was always now, was always this being caught in the same fiendish machine. All those painted screens erected by man to shut out reality—history, religion, duty, social position, all were illusions, mere opium fantasies. [379]

Before discussing the originality of the passage, it is appropriate to mention that the revelatory moment portrayed in the example still relates to the Romanticist tradition of epiphanies. In general, the epiphanies Charles experiences in the novel are results of his encounters with an enigmatic woman, Sarah Woodruff, and this example does not make any difference, although Sarah is not physically present in the situation. Charles's epiphany emerges unexpectedly immediately after he has read a letter from Sarah, a letter that makes him a bit confused and demands of him that he makes a choice between meeting Sarah secretly or losing her forever. As such, the passage finds its counterpart most notably in Robert Browning's poetry where the epiphanies originate from the intensity of the love affair.[380] In other words, the timelessness Charles experiences in the passage emerges from a meeting of a woman and a man, as so often in Browning's poems.

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[379] *FLW*, 178-179.

[380] Nichols 1987, 116.

Nevertheless, the quality and content of Charles's vision are quite different from those depicted in Browning's poems, for instance in *By the Fire-side*.[381] Moreover, the portrayal of the experience of timelessness is not lyrical or even dramatic in the manner of Romantic poetry or modernist prose more generally; it is more intellectually coloured. The epiphany creates a new apprehension of reality in a Wordsworthian vein but the narrator interprets the content more straightforwardly. Moreover, the feeling of harmony and wholeness that is central for Browning, as well as for Joyce, is missing.[382] They are replaced by the knowledge of the burden imposed on a man by society regardless of the particular moment of history.

The anxiety connected to the experience hints at existentialist philosophy. This is no surprise, since John Fowles has been seen as one of the few English existentialist writers besides Iris Murdoch. As if to remove reader's doubts completely, the narrator refers directly to the existentialist sentiment while later describing another intensified experience of Charles's:

> They were not the people for *existentialist moments*, but for chains of cause and effect; for positive all-explaining theories, carefully studied and studiously applied. […] So Charles was inexplicable to himself. He managed a very unconvincing smile.[383]

The anachronistic nature of the experience becomes evident at the latest when the narrator reveals openly the context of the feeling. The discrepancy between diegetic and extradiegetic narrative levels is clear. As a pupil of the positivist thought of the nineteenth century, Charles is perplexed before his sudden experience. He cannot understand his feeling, to say nothing of naming it. On the contrary, the narrator can interpret Charles's psychological reactions with modern philosophical concepts.

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[381] See Browning 1898, 539-547.

[382] Cf. Nichols 1987, 116-117.

[383] *FLW*, 215 (italics added).

The notion of time and history in the first example is of great interest. The conviction that "existence was without history, was always now" comes close to the views of history put forward in postmodern theories of literature and culture. For instance, Fredric Jameson has noted that the postmodern experience of time is characterised by the shortening of the time dimension, which means that we live in a "perpetual present."[384]

However, the idea of time put forward in the passage from *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the views Jameson has of the postmodern notion of history collide in one important aspect. Jameson's view of the shortening of the time dimension and the fragmentation of the experience of time is part of his criticism of postmodern culture, which he sees as a nihilistic and schizophrenic product of late capitalism and consumer society. On the contrary, the passage from Fowles's novel is a description of a personal revelation of timelessness, of getting to know the artificiality and hostility of history and society, and one's position in relation to them. It is also an illustration of an anachronistic existential moment because it is a variation of the famous Sartrean idea that *existence precedes essence*: according to the passage, existence precedes fixed ideas of "history, religion, duty" and "social position." As such, the revelation is a positive experience for the character, even though he is not yet able to understand it.[385]

That the novel seems to resist the application of certain postmodern theories of history to its textual analysis does not mean that it is less of a postmodernist novel. I agree with Liisa Saariluoma who has remarked that postmodernist novels (or, *postindividualist novels* as she calls them) do not follow any particular notion of history or time, and that their standpoint is not on average as radical as the theories of postmodern society and post-structuralism imply.[386] Moreover, I believe that the theories of the perspectives and philosophical ideas put forward in postmodernist literature can only be based on a large amount of empirical

[384] Jameson 1983, 125.

[385] The passage can be seen as part of the text's imitation of the structure of Victorian novels of inner development.

[386] Saariluoma 1992, 55.

analysis.[387] Without an exact empirical study, the individuality and the intentions of a particular text will be lost.[388]

However, the notion of horizontal history presented in the first extract from *The French Lieutenant's Woman* seems to accord with the ethics of postmodernism. Horizontal history is opposed to vertical or teleological history, the idea of history "ascending to a perfection." According to the passage, a person is always situated in the present. In this respect, a man is always, despite the particular moment of history, on the same horns of a dilemma between free choice and external pressure. This idea accords with the view of postmodern ethics that moral responsibility is, in Zygmunt Bauman's terms, "the first reality of the self," because Charles recognises that the Victorian duties imposed on man by religion or social position, in other words, all societal efforts at ethical legislation, are ambiguous and artificial ("illusions" or "opium fantasies").[389] Consequently, a human being is the ultimate originator of cultural and ethical change and not societal legislation or technical innovations.

Charles experiences the implications of the timelessness of his revelation as hostile, because they strongly counter his and his age's beliefs. Therefore, Charles's first moment of insight appears as "a flash of black lightning." The description of the second moment of revelation makes this clear. When Charles awaits Sarah in the woods, he experiences again an intense vision that is effected by a trilling wren:

> It [the wren] seemed to announce a far deeper and stranger reality than the pseudo-Linnaean one that Charles had sensed on the beach that earlier

[387] A similar point is made by Linda Hutcheon (1985, 3).

[388] This is what seems to happen in Jameson's theorisation of the notion of history in contemporary fiction. It is striking how few examples Jameson gives before making generalisations about the nature of postmodernist literature. This dearth becomes clear if one compares, for instance, the discussion (1991, 367–371) he offers on the "fantastic" historiography of contemporary novels with McHale's (1987, 94–96) treatment of the same subject.

[389] Cf. Bauman 1993, 13-14.

> morning–perhaps nothing more original than a priority of existence over death, of the individual over the species, of ecology over classification. We take such priorities for granted today; and we cannot imagine the hostile implications to Charles of the obscure message the wren was announcing. For it was less a profounder reality he seemed to see than universal chaos, looming behind the fragile structure of human order.[390]

The enigmatic experiences of timelessness shakes drastically Charles's belief in evolutionary theory and, as James Martin Lang adds, "coincides on a more personal level with Charles's parallel realisation that this contingency leaves his future […] frighteningly open."[391]

I find Lang's discussion of the novel's relationship with time, history and evolution correct. On the contrary, Simon Loveday's claim that the idea of horizontal history is paradoxical is questionable. Loveday thinks that it questions the whole idea about historical development and progress that he believes lies at the heart of the novel.[392] However, I find his claim that "the few" would be, according to Fowles "'in the lead' in the gradual evolution of humanity" problematic, as Loveday seems to spin this teleological idea out of nothing, i.e. he does not point to any textual evidence in order to show us that this is really the idea put forward in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.[393] Furthermore, I do not agree with those distorted interpretations that claim that the nineteenth century idea about evolution would offer a corrective for the stasis of the century.[394] I believe that it is just the novel's point to show that the new sciences actually were at least partially characterised by stasis. Moreover, it is the effort of the novel to show that an individual is always faced with the same existential dilemma and

[390] *FLW*, 208-209.

[391] Lang 1997, 73.

[392] Loveday 1985, 67.

[393] Ibid., 63.

[394] See e.g. DeVitis and Palmer 1974, 97-98.

that he or she is always subjected to external power, even if the degree of the inhumanity and determinacy of historical periods and societies vary.

The anachronistic nature of Charles's experiences of timelessness becomes clear when the idea of horizontal history is compared to Immanuel Kant's radically different view of historical progress. Kant thought that the people of bygone times could not have been as happy as modern men because history moves towards perfection. He believed that earlier generations are only unhappy servants of the more educated, civilised and better-equipped people of the future.[395] So, the idea that the self always resides in the same existential situation differs essentially from Kant's teleological principle of historical development. Corresponding to Kant's thoughts, the Victorian epoch gave birth to the optimistic theory of biological evolution (Darwin), and similar ideas were brought up also in philosophical writings on society (Spencer) and history (Marx). In other words, there is a great inconsistency between the *episteme* of the Victorian era and the ideas about the identity of all times and the non-progressive nature of history that arises in Charles's mind in a sudden moment of revelation. Moreover, the suggested *non*teleology of historical processes and the portrayal of the identity of all times can be considered as a variation on the postmodern theme of the end of history, or *post*history.[396]

The idea of horizontal history or posthistory is set forth a little differently in *A Maggot*. *A Maggot* is the story about a mysterious disappearance of Mr Bartholomew in the Southwest of England in 1736. The reader cannot avoid comparing the disappearance depicted in Fowles's novel to Christ's rising from the dead, since Mr Bartholomew has last been seen going into a large cave, and one of the witnesses, Rebecca Lee, compares him to Jesus Christ. As I have stated above, the whole novel can be read as a palimpsest–in Gérard Genette's sense of the term–of the Gospels.[397] Therefore, the novel connects symbolically

[395] Kant 1959, 22-34.

[396] For an excellent account of the postmodern conception of the end of history or posthistory, and on the postmodern experience of time more generally, see Heise 1997, 11-76.

[397] See Ch. 3.3.1.

the cultural situation of eighteenth-century England and the first-century Palestine. The novel suggests a similarity between the eighteenth-century Quakers and the early Christians who both opposed established religion and secular power. In sum, the novel proposes that there is a certain parallel between the two periods of history and that the same existential situation is recurrently present in history.[398]

A Maggot is a pseudo-religious novel, and there are many supernatural visions incorporated in the story. What makes the novel exceptional is that it does not reveal the real origin of the visions. The reader is not able to arrive at a definitive conclusion whether they are the products of hallucinations or of supernatural powers. The novel also suggests that the visit of a time machine or a spaceship to England in 1736 might have caused them. They could also be part of a great deception. The novel hints at all these explanations, but the use of the technique of ambiguous narration–or of the fantastic structure as Tzvetan Todorov has defined it–makes it impossible for the reader to find confirmation for any one of them.

I shall ponder more closely the contents of the visions in Chapter 6. It suffices here to say that every witness sees events differently. In other words, the novel creates different lines of interpretation for the mysterious events of the novel by letting each intradiegetic narrator tell the story from their own coloured point of view. For instance, David Jones thinks he has seen the Devil in the cave, and Rebecca explains that she has been witnessing the appearance of Christ.

[398] Lang argues that *A Maggot* critiques the traditional historiographical practice of *backshadowing* (see Ch. 1.2) that often judges "past actors as if they would have known what we can see from our present perspective." According to Lang, the best historical fiction such as *A Maggot* creates a "dialogue between historiography's contemporary perspective and fiction's imaginative recreation of the horizon of possibilities open to the inhabitants of the past." (Lang 1997, 64) Indeed, the openness of the future and the nonteleology of historical processes are ideas that makes the representation of history in *A Maggot* and in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* postmodern and ethical.

Moreover, the reader can recognise in one part of Rebecca's vision a description of twentieth-century warfare.

The part these visions play in the poetic composition of the novel is of more interest in this context. The visions Rebecca Lee, one of the central characters and intra- and homodiegetic narrators of the novel, see in the cave are to her theophanies, clear manifestations of divinity.[399] Consequently, the representation of the visions is partly in accordance with the historical context of the story, since it seems to record the beliefs and superstitions of the eighteenth century more or less authentically. However, the reader can claim that Rebecca interprets the vision incorrectly, because she does not seem to understand that a time machine, or a spaceship, has landed at the cave.[400] The visions become coloured by the context of a modern reader and contemporary popular fiction. As it cannot be judged from the novel itself which interpretative context, theological, scientific (that of sf), or–to name yet one more–mythological,[401] is correct, the unity of the novel is put to a severe test. The mixing of several different discourses and generic forms in this particular way causes a strong centrifugal force in the reading of the novel. Because of the use of this strategy of narrative ambiguity, *A Maggot* is a brilliant example of postmodernist heteroglossia.[402]

However, the novel does not entirely lack certain unifying and organising generic and narrative principles. One of them is the romance structure, which seems to bind all the various interpretative contexts together. If the matter were viewed only from this standpoint, the question of the real origin of the visions would seem inessential. As we have seen, vision is one of the three main structural parts of a romance besides quest and ordeal.[403] As the romance is one of Frye's ahistorical generic categories or *mythoi*, the visions of Homer's *Odyssey*,

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[399] For the distinction between epiphanies and theophanies, see Nichols 1987, 30, 34 and passim.

[400] See below Ch. 6.4.

[401] For the allusions made to Celtic mythology, see below Ch. 6.2.

[402] For a discussion of postmodernist heteroglossia, see McHale 1989, 166–170.

[403] For further discussion on the structure of a romance, see above Ch. 4.2.

Chrétien de Troyes's chivalric romances and Elizabethan romances, to name but a few examples, can be seen to share the same qualities. In this respect, it is merely a cultural question what people find fascinating enough to represent as visions in a romance of their own time: it was sirens for Homer, birds in a tree singing in parts for Chrétien, and a three-partite mother-goddess or a woman humanoid for Fowles.[404] The visions of a romance can be seen to be chosen to touch the sensibility of contemporary readers, and they might be a part of the text's way of dealing with some current moral issue.

Nevertheless, the poetical idiosyncrasies between romances of different periods can not be ignored. The way *A Maggot* combines the visions and ambiguous structure is, as far as I know, quite original not only in romances but also in literature in general. As for its ambiguous narrative structure, the closest counterpart is Henry James's late-Victorian fantastic tale *The Turn of the Screw*, but Fowles's novel differs from it in its richness of mutually exclusive codes of interpretation, as we shall see later in Chapter 6. This problematic overflow of codes is a central aspect of the postmodernism of the novel.[405] It is also why the ontological nature of the visions depicted in the novel is shrouded in mystery.

The analysis of the examples suggests that the visions portrayed in Fowles's fiction have different literary and philosophical roots. The passage from *Daniel Martin* can clearly be traced to the tradition of Romanticist and modernist epiphanies. The intensified moments in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are not so pure in origin. They might emerge in a situation common to Romantic poetry, and literary romances, but, rather than portraying epiphanies in the strict sense of the word, they depict existentialist moments of revelation. Finally, the ambiguous structure of *A Maggot* prevents the reader from reaching a definitive conclusion about the real nature of the visions in the novel. The visions the novel depicts

[404] See below Ch. 6.

[405] For a discussion on the overflow of codes in postmodern narratives, see Silverman 1997, 89-97.

then are only like pastiches of theophanies, or of other kinds of mystical visions, and they remain without clear ontological status.[406]

Contemporary novels like Fowles's issue a challenge to the theory of epiphanies. Current theoretical works on the subject, such like Morris Beja's *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* and Ashton Nichols's *The Poetics of Epiphany*, have concentrated on Romantic, Victorian and modernist poetry and prose.[407] Nichols closes his work with a discussion of the epiphanies in the poetry of Seamus Heaney, but the emphasis is still on the modernist notion of an epiphany. However, the current analysis of Fowles's novels shows that there are at least two kinds of concrete questions that demand further theoretical study. First, what is the exact relationship between epiphanies and the moments of revelation portrayed in existentialist literature? Second, what becomes of epiphanies and theophanies when they are adapted as parts of postmodernist narrative structures?

Ursula K. Heise's brief discussion on postmodernist epiphanies seems, in my view, a step in the right direction. She argues that the temporality of postmodernist narratives "does not allow for privileged instants of epiphany, visions of coherence, or unmediated access to the past as one finds them in modernist novels," because epiphanies might be cancelled out by a succeeding, dissimilar depiction of the same event.[408] Indeed, the epiphanies in postmodernist fiction, it could be argued, are more fragmented, temporary and even anguished (existential *Angst*) than in Romanticist poetry or modernist narratives. As we have seen, the feeling of peace and completeness that is central for modernist epiphanies is lost in the revelatory moments in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

Moreover, Lyotard's notion of the sublime seems to suit the analysis of the postmodernity of Fowles's epiphanies perfectly well. Both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* seem to carry out, in Lyotard's terms, an

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[406] The indefinable nature of the visions of *A Maggot* causes ontological hesitation in the reader. Ontological hesitation is a central aspect of postmodernist poetics. See McHale 1989, 12–13 and passim.

[407] See Beja 1971 and Nichols 1987.

[408] Heise 1997, 65.

"activity of paralogism" that challenge the grand narratives of early eighteenth- and late nineteenth-century England. In other words, the novels can be considered as stories of the inauguration of certain small narratives that transgress the boundaries of what is regarded as normal and reasonable. Through the treatment of the sublime, of the depiction of the experience of infinity and indeterminacy, they, in Lyotard's terms, "wage war on" eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "totality."[409] The overt otherness and inexplicability of Sarah and Rebecca and the mysteries surrounding them are catalysts for revealing to the reader, and potentially for some characters, especially for Charles and Mr Ayscough, the arbitrariness and fictionality of every frame of totalitarian explanation, especially those of the depicted historical eras: they point to the infinite mysteriousness of being. In sum, the novels' treatment of revelatory moments have their roots in religious theophanies, secular Romanticist or existentialist views of the experiences of infinity and the sublime, but they thematise the subversive content of these moments in the fashion of postmodern ethics and philosophy.

[409] Lyotard 1984, 82.

CHAPTER 5: *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN* AS NEO-VICTORIAN NOVEL

The rewriting of the Victorian era has been one major area in the academic discussion of postmodernity. As Kucich and Sadoff note, the aim of this rewriting has been to create self-awareness in the present.[410] Their examples show the multiplicity of this critical activity:

> New academic historicisms have enabled a wide range of theoretical revisionings [...] and [...] the nineteenth century has been a particularly fertile area for consideration. The period has been marked by major critical texts that claim to have found in the nineteenth century the origins of contemporary consumerism (Baudrillard), sexual science (Foucault), gay culture (Sedgwick et al.), and gender identity (Gilbert and Gubar, Showalter, Armstrong). Ethnography, economics, science studies, the history of medicine, and other popular areas of scholarly inquiry have focused on the nineteenth-century materials that they view as anchoring their respective disciplinary paradigms.[411]

[410] Kucich and Sadoff 2000, xiii.

[411] Ibid., xiii-xiv.

A parallel phenomenon has dominated the arts, and not least literature. Tatjana Jukic argues that the construction of the Victorian era is characteristic especially for the British postmodernist novels in which it serves as "a magic mirror" for the defining of the latter half of the twentieth century.[412] Victorian revivalism, however, occurs repeatedly in English-language novels of the 1980s and 1990s other than just the British. Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1997), E. L. Doctorow's *The Water Works* (1994) and Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1991), *Jack Maggs* (1997) and *The History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) are examples of the new Canadian, American and Australian novels that rewrite the Victorian period.

The French Lieutenant's Woman has been regarded as the first comprehensive postmodernist novel to represent the Victorian era.[413] It is thus the first ample representative of what Dana Shiller calls the neo-Victorian novel. In Shiller's critical parlance, the term *neo-Victorian novel* refers exclusively to postmodernist historical novels representing the Victorian era.[414] I shall use the term here in a similar manner. Yet it must be remembered that there are, of course, other important rewritings of the Victorian era that do not belong to this subgenre. Notably, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is, like *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, constructed on the basis of an intertextual play with Victorian fiction–it rewrites Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*–but it is a modernist rather than a postmodernist text.[415] However, Rhys's novel is the first important novel in the British post-war tradition of historical novels that rewrites a Victorian literary subtext. There are also some important contemporary historical novels of a more classical and modernist type that rewrite Victorian fiction, such as Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*.[416]

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[412] Jukic 2000, 77.

[413] Cf. Jukic 2000, 77.

[414] Shiller 1997.

[415] Jukic 2000, 78.

[416] Sally Shuttleworth (1998) calls the rewritings of Victorian stories 'retro-Victorian novels.'

After *The French Lieutenant's Woman* several other British neo-Victorian novels have been published that develop further or even exhaust postmodernist poetics. These include Peter Ackroyd's three novels, *Chatterton* (1987), *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1989) and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983) and A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1991).[417]

My present aim however is to read *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a postmodernist neo-Victorian novel. I shall, of course, concentrate on examining those characteristics of the novel that have been partly or completely overlooked in the previous studies. First, this chapter probes the way *The French Lieutenant's Woman* rewrites some of the motifs common to Victorian fiction, the motif of a young woman reading fiction, the governess motif, the disguise motif, and the orphan motif. At the center of all these motif analyses lies the figure of Sarah Woodruff. Second, this chapter examines the way Fowles's novel represents the great crisis of Darwinism in Victorian England. I shall read Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as the subtext of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and compare the ways these two novels deal with the model of classical (Aristotelian) tragedy. This intertextual analysis also presents another Victorian motif dealt with in Fowles's novel, namely *the fallen woman*. Third, the chapter reads *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as an erotic novel and tries in particular to show that the novel anticipates Foucault's notion of Victorian sexuality, even if the novel is not completely committed to the same philosophy of power.[418]

[417] For a more comprehensive list of neo-Victorian fictions, see Gutleben 2001, 6.

[418] It should be noted that postmodernist literature responds in several different ways to post-structuralist ideas of power, the subject and the fragmentation of the self. For instance, Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984) has been read more as a critique of the "poststructuralist idiom" than its mimicry (see Fokkema 1991, 165).

5.1 Non-confirming Women: Sarah Woodruff and the Rewriting of the Motifs of Victorian Fiction

Let us begin from the youth and schooling of Sarah Woodruff. The narrator tells that Sarah's father, a tenant farmer, forced her out of her own class by having her study at a ladies' seminary in Exeter. Nevertheless, she never made the transition to the next one since her father did not succeed in his foolish attempt to become a wealthy farm owner by buying a cheap piece of land. As she did not match, she was doomed to live as an intelligent, educated and unmarried young woman without finding her proper place in Victorian society. Moreover, her "instinctual profundity of insight," her ability to see through people's pretensions intuitively, emphasises her tragic situation.[419]

In other words, the narrator provides the reader with a realistic description of Sarah Woodruff's background, and offers a sociological as well as psychological explanation for her tragic situation as an outsider in a caste society. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals that the narrator's description of Sarah's youth is also based on some certain literary conventions inherent in the nineteenth-century English fiction.

To begin with, the description of Sarah's youth presents *the motif of a young woman reading fiction*. Victorian variations on this motif are found for instance in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and in George Eliot's novels *Middlemarch* (1871-1872), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876), where young female characters are keen readers of popular romances. Of course, reading is a motif that has been dealt with in literature all the way from *Don Quixote* (1605-1615) to *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) or *Madame Bovary* (1857). As these examples also show, reading is often linked to the questions of madness, ethics and transgression. The case of *Madame Bovary* is of special interest here, as *The French Lieutenant's Woman* overtly refers to it. As Keith M.

[419] *FLW*, 50-51.

Booker notes, both Flaubert's and Fowles's novels are concerned with transgressive sexuality.[420]

The following citation from *The French Lieutenant's Woman* deals with Sarah as a reader of literature:

> Thus it had come about that she had read far more fiction, and far more poetry, those two sanctuaries of the lonely, than most of her kind. They served as a substitute for experience. Without realizing it she judged people as much by the standards of Walter Scott and Jane Austen as by any empirically arrived at; seeing those around her as fictional characters, and making poetic judgements on them. But alas, what she had thus taught herself had been very largely vitiated by what she had been taught. Given the veneer of a lady, she was made the perfect victim of a caste society.[421]

The passage reveals that Sarah's literary education has strengthened her innate skills to judge people. She compares living people to the characters of literature, and literature gives her fictional models for making moral and psychological judgements on her fellow people.

Yet reading fiction has also been quite harmful to her. Formal and literary education has made her an outcast and separated her mentally from her own class. Education has provided for Sarah her living when her father was sent to a lunatic asylum; she worked as a governess with a family near Dorchester–but her class position has not given her the possibility of being among, and conversing with, her equals. For her, a member of the lower classes, formal and literary education, and the growth of consciousness are, therefore, not sources of happiness and freedom but something of a curse.

In short, Fowles's novel explores the influence of literature on its heroine and the relationship between fiction and Victorian reality. In this respect, it deals with

[420] Booker 1991, 85; see also Ch. 5.3.

[421] *FLW*, 50.

the same problem that George Eliot's novels examine repeatedly: female desire and its problematic relationship to the surrounding social environment.

Diane Elam has studied women as readers of romances in George Eliot's novels. She argues that romance "carries the prospect of dissatisfaction for women as a structured principle implicit in its opening."[422] On the reading experience of Maggie Tulliver, the heroine of *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), she writes the following:

> Romance itself, with its alternative visions for women, creates desires that Maggie feels are excessive. A full life is not only unobtainable, it is literally unthinkable for Maggie. The full life that might become desirable for the dark woman would itself be full of too many desires, desires which must remain unspoken.[423]

According to Elam, *The Mill on the Floss* finally "fails to present any effective resolution for the problem of the relationship between romance and reality."[424]

Nevertheless, Elam argues that the reading of romances is not only a form of ideological social control, keeping female desire in "the realm of the unreal." [425] The reading of romances offers an authentic female desire, a desire for a full life. That is to say, the reading of romances is an important source of female experience. Moreover, Elam maintains that female desire is even inseparable from the reading of romances because women identify with their characters.

Yet it is a desire that nineteenth-century realism could not deal with. The heroines of Eliot's novels such as Maggie Tulliver or Dorothea Brooke do not have the possibility of returning from the world of romances to "a 'reality' of publicly sanctioned desire." In Victorian society, women do not have, for example, monetary or parliamentary ambitions as men do. That is to say, society

[422] Elam 1992, 132.

[423] Ibid.

[424] Ibid., 133.

[425] Ibid., 126-127.

forces the women to be dull, dull readers of just "silly romances."[426] In sum, reading romances is an essential part of Victorian culture for women, but at the same time, it does not prepare them to meet the surrounding society.

Similarly, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* describes the reading of literature, especially the romances of Walter Scott, the novels of Jane Austen and some poetry, as a source of excessive desire. An interesting detail is that Sarah has read Scott's novels just like Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*. As indicated earlier, reading was dissatisfying for Sarah, since it displaced her in caste society and made her long in vain for mentally satisfying relationships. In this respect, the description of Sarah's youth is in accordance with Elam's thought that the difference, the "dark specificity" of female desire, does not find its entry into the public realm within Victorian society. Elam argues that female desire can find public expression only as "a romance of separation," that is to say, women who try to fulfil their desires in Victorian society "either become anonymous and unhistorical, living a merely private romance like Dorothea, or they encounter romance as the limitation and failure of their own desire, like Rosamond Vincy."[427]

The motif of a young woman reading fiction is also present in Carey's *Jack Maggs*. As another rewriting of Victorian fiction, a new interpretation of the story of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Carey's novel offers an interesting point of comparison with *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. It contains two female characters influenced by the reading of fiction, Lizzie Warriner and Mercy Larkin. Lizzie, the sister-in-law and mistress of a famous author Tobias Oates, is warned by her sister Mary Oates not to take the novels she reads too seriously:

> Is it something in your novel [*Castle Rackrent*] that is making you talk of this? Do you remember when Mama forbade you to read any more on

[426] Ibid., 134.

[427] Elam 1992, 138.

> account of all the notions you were getting from your novels? You will have your own husband in good time.[428]

Marcy Larking, for her part, dreams about eventually becoming the wife of her "benefactor" and lover Percy Buckle. She has borrowed the model for her daydream from Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740):

> Waiting for Jack Maggs, she considered her own recklessness. She had not forgotten how Mr Buckle loved to read her *Pamela*. Nor did she over-look her own deep pleasure in the tale. Neither servant nor master ever discussed their attachment to the novel, but it was as clear as day to her that she, like Pamela, might one day be mistress of the house wherein she had been called to serve.[429]

There are some differences in the description of the women as readers in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Jack Maggs*, even if they turn out alike. Firstly, the woman readers in *Jack Maggs* tend to see themselves as characters of romances like the women in George Eliot's novels, but only the narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* tells that one of the characters, Sarah, sees "those *around her* as fictional characters."[430] This indicates that Sarah has the ability to maintain a critical distance to the surrounding world and culture. At least Sarah does not seem to be as a naïve reader of literature as Mercy Larking in *Jack Maggs*: it is ironic that Mercy identifies with Pamela, the archetype of a pure and virtuous woman, since Mercy has been raped as a child and since she has had a permanent extramarital sexual relationship with Percy Buckle. Sarah seems to have a much clearer, if more bitter, understanding of her tragic situation in Victorian culture and, moreover, of the discursive nature of that culture. The reading of literature also seems to have made it possible for Sarah to take the

[428] *JM*, 259.

[429] *JM*, 165.

[430] *FLW*, 50, emphasis added.

position of an author, to gain at least some power to manipulate her own faith, even if gaining complete autonomy and power in Victorian society seems a hopeless effort.

Reading literature then is more of an act of critical knowledge–and not only a source of female desire–in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* than in *Jack Maggs*, even if the knowledge gained is painful for a woman of humble background. It should be added, though, that Mercy Larking is determined to become a private prostitute to Percy Buckle only to survive in Victorian society, and, therefore, her identification with Pamela is not only ironic but also tragic. Consequently, the descriptions of Mercy and Sarah are both tragic regardless of the irony in *Jack Maggs*. Both exemplify clearly the conflict between female desire and the prevailing cultural and social conditions.

Secondly, the reading of romances forms a social bond between nineteenth-century women both in *Jack Maggs* and Eliot's novels, but it is not possible to estimate whether this is the case in the world of *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* In Fowles's novel, Sarah is the only reader of romances. Moreover, unlike *Jack Maggs* or George Eliot's novels *The French Lieutenant's Woman* reminds the reader that there were many illiterate people among the lower classes in the Victorian era, even if the ability to read increased towards the end of the century. The following passage describes the personality of Millie, Mrs Poulteney's young servant:

> One night, then, Sarah heard the girl weeping. She went into her room and comforted her, which was not too difficult, for Millie was a child in all but her years; unable to read or write and as little able to judge the other humans around her as a dog; if you patted her, she understood—if you kicked her, then that was life.[431]

It is important to note that as an illiterate and undiscriminating woman Millie is the very opposite of Sarah. So, the passage above offers confirmation for the

[431] *FLW*, 138.

interpretation that the ability to read is considered an act of knowledge and a source of intellectual power in the novel.

In conclusion, both Fowles's and Carey's novels dramatically indicate that female desire does not have a place in Victorian society. Sarah is alienated from society as a result of her reading of literature. In *Jack Maggs*, correspondingly, Percy Buckle informs Mercy, the enthusiastic reader of *Pamela*, that he no longer requires her "service," and dismisses her. Furthermore, Lizzie's longing for a genuine romance has led her into a sexual relationship with her brother-in-law. As a consequence of this secret relationship she finally dies of an overdose of abortion pills. In both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Jack Maggs*, therefore, the reading of literature appears to be a source of dissatisfaction or even deadly dangerous for Victorian women, not to mention that *Jack Maggs* describes love and sexuality as subjugated to manly power in nineteenth-century England. In brief, both *Jack Maggs* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* portray a collision between the predestination of the life of the Victorian woman and the female desire produced by the reading of literature.

The reading motif links up with the *disguise motif* in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. With the disguise motif is meant the building of an artificial identity. This motif is common in Victorian fiction proper, not to mention that identity is one of the most common themes in all literature. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* resembles Victorian novels in this respect, since Sarah's romance with the French lieutenant is fictitious. Sarah has deliberately chosen her own story and identity, even if it gives her a bad reputation. As in several Victorian novels, Sarah's effort seems to find a change into her life, as well as satisfying company through the disguise. Both romances that Sarah is living, the fictitious one with the French lieutenant and the real one with Charles, appear to be her desperate efforts to fulfil her unconscionable desires, a frantic reaction followed by the displacement of her identity through reading literature. However, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* this narrative pattern seems to be upside-down if compared with Victorian fiction. Sarah deliberately chooses the role of "Magdalene," the fallen woman, while in Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1864) the female protagonist,

Isabel Vane, uses a false identity in trying to get back the life she has lost after committing adultery.[432]

In Victorian fiction, the disguise motif can be seen to reflect the attitudes or metaphysical claims of nineteenth-century England. Generally speaking, the motif corresponds with the common idea of that time that there is some deeper meaning hidden behind the material reality, and only God is aware of this meaning: "appearances belie meaning."[433] In contrast, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* seems to claim, drawing on existentialist philosophy, that there is no hidden meaning or theological or historical teleology behind appearances (i.e. existence precedes essence). Thus, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* uses the Victorian motif of disguise, but not in order to show that people have to look for their real or lost identity like the characters of Victorian fiction; rather it aims to show that there is no secret teleological principle that determines society, culture, history, or personal identities. It therefore suggests that people should be relatively free to construct their own identities, and that it is unethical to try to define others by some reductive–whether Romantic, theological, or scientific–explanation.

As regards the description of Sarah's youth, another subject matter borrowed from the Victorian library is *the governess motif*. In nineteenth-century England, being a governess was one of those rare occupations that were socially accepted and suitable for educated women. As an orphan and a governess, educated but not wealthy, Sarah resembles Jane Eyre. Like Jane in Charlotte Brontë's famous novel, Sarah is an exceptional, lonely and repressed Romantic character in search of fulfilment in Victorian society.

Nevertheless, there is a clear difference between these two characters. If the reader approaches *The French Lieutenant's Woman* according to the conventions of nineteenth-century English literature, she or he will not expect Sarah to triumph. In the beginning of the story, people around Sarah believe that she has

[432] For this example and for the treatment of "Magdalene" or fallen woman in Victorian literature in general, see Reed 1975, 58-72.

[433] Ibid., 337 and passim.

lost her innocence (even if it later appears that this has not been the case) and is, therefore, condemned not to have a family of her own. In this particular respect, Sarah Woodruff resembles more the "dark" heroines of Walter Scott's historical romances: she is more like Minna in *The Pirate* (1822), than Jane. Sarah's final success violates the conventions of historical romances that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* partially imitates. On the contrary, Jane Eyre is as pure and virtuous as an exemplary character of the Victorian romance should be.

The French Lieutenant's Woman also contains the Victorian *orphan motif*. In this respect, it resembles several other late nineteenth-century neo-Victorian novels. For instance, Graham Swift's *Waterland*, A. S. Byatt's *Possession* and Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* all include a character that has been raised motherless like Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Moreover, the problem of orphanhood is the main theme of Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*. A bizarre version of this subject matter occur in Peter Ackroyd's crime novel *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, where the young Victorian heroine supposedly murders her own mother, thus becoming an orphan.

In Victorian fiction, this motif was popular for particular reasons. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the main audience for prose fiction was the middle class, and it did not want to read too rude and plain descriptions of the life of the lower classes. Actually, it was not until the beginning of the century that the middle class found prose fiction respectable enough. The historical novels of Sir Walter Scott seem to have played a central part in changing its attitudes. The middle class was, though, interested in philanthropy, and, as readers of literature, the orphan motif appealed to their sentiments. This might partly explain the success of the Victorian novels containing this motif. On the other hand, orphanhood added a special pathos for the already appealing representation of children. Moreover, the portrayal of nubile and enticing young orphan women in Victorian novels seems to have added an erotic flavour to the representation of orphanhood, as in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853).[434]

[434] Cf. Reed 1975, 254.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the vicar of Lyme affirms that Sarah's father is dead and that she has no other relatives.[435] As an orphan, she seems to be a perfect object for Mrs Poulteney's charity. From the reader's point of view, Sarah's orphanhood and loneliness emphasise her difference, eccentricity and isolation from the surrounding society, instead of raising empathy and sentimental feelings to the same degree as in the orphan stories of Dickens. From Charles's point of view, however, the orphan Sarah's childlike vulnerability add to her erotic appeal and seem to function as a trap for him.[436] Sarah's intentions can be seen as morally questionable, since she seems to make an effort to steal Charles from Ernestina.[437] Charles plays the romantic game of knighthood, in the best spirit of Victorian medievalism, as he plans to rescue her "maiden in distress." That Charles falls in love with Sarah shows that his motives are not purely based on modern emancipatory thoughts about fallen women and prostitutes. Sarah's orphanhood can be seen to end positively when she finally finds her "home" among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, gives up all her previous disguises, and forms her new identity and personality as Sarah Roughwood.[438]

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[435] It should be noticed, though, that Sarah was already earning her living as a governess when her father died in a lunatic asylum. Whether she is an orphan in the strict sense of the word is open to interpretation: she lost her father only at the threshold of adulthood. Surprisingly, nothing is told about her mother. It is reasonable enough to assume that her father raised her alone, although the novel leaves this question open.

[436] Cf. *FLW*, 214.

[437] Sarah's effort to seduce Charles could also be seen as a part of the Darwinian plot of the novel. Consequently, Sarah could be seen to act the way she does because she is compelled to reproduce herself. For this argument and for an overall account of the manifestation of the postmodern evolutionary theory in the novel, see Jackson 1997.

[438] As Reed notes, the name change often indicates metamorphosis of personality in Victorian fiction, as in Bulwer-Lytton's *The Disowned* (1828) where Clarence L'Estrange alias Linden "has not idly accepted the prerequisites and advantages of noble birth, but has laboured to create the identity for which he was destined" (1975, 295-296).

5.2 Challenging Neo-Darwinian Fate

The French Lieutenant's Woman is a neo-Victorian Novel also in the sense that it deals with Darwinism and traces its impact upon Victorian society. It is commonly acknowledged that Darwinian thought strongly influenced Victorian novelists, and critics such as Gillian Beer and Georg Levine have studied this impact in general whilst Sally Shuttleworth, Redmond O'Hanlon and Peter R. Morton have analysed Darwin's ideas in the works of individual Victorian authors.[439] For its part, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* comments on Freud's ideas from a postmodern perspective and, as I will concentrate on showing in the following, estimates especially the view of Darwinism that is expressed in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* from 1891.

The French Lieutenant's Woman has of course been read in the light of Darwinism previously. In his article "Charles and the Hopeful Monster: Postmodern Evolutionary Theory in the French Lieutenant's Woman," Tony Jackson thoroughly analyses the novel as expressing postmodern theories about evolution. He argues that Fowles's novel disengages from nineteenth-century Darwinism and shows kinship with the recent theories of evolution that, for their part, conform to the postmodern criticism of Western metaphysics. These post-Freudian features include ideas about the discontinuity, abruptness and aimlessness (anti-teleological characteristics) of biological evolution. Moreover, according to Jackson, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* represents the idea that Darwinian evolution finds its expression by creating a new way of thinking, i.e. the modern man. Sarah is "the hopeful monster" who feels alienated in Victorian culture without being able to conceptualise his intuitive understanding of her otherness and modernity. As Jackson shows, Sarah's and her contemporaries' inability to conceptualise her otherness and strangeness, is a representation of the postmodernist moment of creation and evolution.[440]

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[439] See Beer 1983, Levine 1988, Shuttlewoth 1984, O'Hanlon 1984 and Morton 1991.

[440] Jackson 1997.

There is, nevertheless, another way still that Fowles's novel comments on Victorian Darwinism, and that is the way it deals with Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and its representation of Victorian (Neo-)Darwinism. The relationship between *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Tess* is not based only upon the use of the same motifs but also on exact allusions, and, therefore, a definite intertextual relationship is established. Thus, these two novels together constitute a major problem for interpretation. The following intertextual analysis aims to make the picture of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s representation of Darwinism more complete as it pays attention to an intertextual feature of the novel unnoticed in previous studies.[441]

Let us begin by examining the striking similarities in the stories about Tess's and Sarah's background that establish a clear allusive base between the two novels. The narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* reveals that "[f]our generations back on the paternal side one came upon clearly established gentlemen" and that "[t]here was even a remote relationship with the Drake family, an irrelevant fact that had petrified gradually over the years into the assumption of a direct lineal descent from the great Sir Francis."[442] Similarly, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* parson Tringham gives the following account of Tess's father's roots:

> "[…] Don't you really know, Durbeyfield, that you are the lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the d'Urbervilles, who derive their descent from Sir Pagan d'Urberville, that renowned knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror, as appears by Battle Abbey Roll?"[443]

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[441] For an account of the intertextual relationship between *FLW* and Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) and on the use of *the motif of fossils* in both, see DeVitis and Palmer (1974). Their article together with the present analysis of another Victorian subtext, clearly reveal how systematically *FLW* rewrites Hardy's novels in the constructing of its plot, characters, and thematics.

[442] *FLW*, 51.

[443] *Ts*, 4.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* it is said, moreover, that "[t]he family had certainly owned a manor of sorts in that cold green no-man's land between Dartmoor and Oxmoor."[444] Likewise, in *Tess* the parson declares that "[i]n this county there was a seat of yours at Kingsbere, and another at Sherton, and another at Millpond, and another at Lullstead, and another at Wellbridge."[445] In conclusion, both Tess and Sarah belong to an extinct, or at least degenerated, county family.

The similarities do not end there. Sarah's father became preoccupied with his own ancestry like Tess's father. Tess's father makes a fool out of himself by boasting about his blue blood. In like manner, Sarah's father was in the habit of boasting over his distinguished ancestry.[446] In both novels, the obsession turns out to be unfortunate for many people, not least for the heroines. It causes the fall of Tess and, ultimately, makes her a murderer. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the attempt of Sarah's father to regain the position and wealth of his ancestors fails dramatically and finally makes him mad and his daughter poor.

There are both similarities and differences in the narrative mode of telling the histories of these two fathers. The dialogues between Tess's father, "Sir John," and other characters in the novel are comic and ironical. Although the description of the life of Sarah's father is short and does not contain any dialogue, the narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is critical towards his boasting and manly self-assertion. The description of him as "a man of excellent principles" who, in fact, had perversely "a fine collection of all the wrong ones" is clearly ironical.[447] In other words, simple and dense ironic narration in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has replaced the situation comedy and comic dialogue of Hardy's novel. Nevertheless, both stories result in ironically questioning manly pride and the forgetting of what is valuable in life.

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[444] *Ts*, 4.

[445] *Ts*, 6.

[446] *FLW*, 51.

[447] *FLW*, 51.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is grounded on a motif that all the readers of English nineteenth-century prose fiction certainly recognise: *the fallen woman*.[448] By means of this motif, *Tess* represents the prejudices of Victorian society. In the novel, the power of Victorian prejudices is best illustrated by the reaction of Tess's husband Angel Clare, a man with liberal ideas, to Tess's confession that she has been with another man: he abandons her, only to regret it when it's too late. The incident in which Tess, by now a murderess, is being caught by the police when sleeping on the slabs of Stonehenge has been seen to symbolise the mental backwardness of the era: the seemingly advanced industrial society is mentally still at the level of the Stone Age, and Tess is its offering.

Corresponding broadly with *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* reveals realistically the prejudices of Victorian people, especially those pervading the life of a small coastal town Lyme Regis in Dorset. It portrays the attitudes of the people of Lyme towards Sarah, "the French lieutenant's whore," the fallen governess. Mrs Poulteney impersonates the religious sentiment and extreme moral attitude of the Victorian era and particularly those of Victorian Evangelicalism. In addition, the representation of the encounter of Charles Smithson and the stigmatised Sarah Woodruff reflects the slightly confused moral disposition of an urban, upper class Victorian gentleman and a relatively advanced amateur scientist of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, the difference in the world-views manifested in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Tess of D'Urbervilles* is of more interest in this context than the realistic depiction of the moral circumstances and sociological facts of

[448] This motif can be found, for instance, in *David Copperfield* (1849-51), where David's friend James Steerforth seduces young Emily. The narrator of Dickens's novel avoids describing the relationship in detail, and the novel uses gaps in its narration in the best Victorian euphemistic manner. The novel also portrays a Victorian lady, Mrs Steerforth, who deprecates this love affair between her son and a young woman of lower class. Consequently, the novel gives an account of the Victorian rule to live according to one's own social standing. Nevertheless, the episode can also be read as a criticism of the obligation to marry from one's own class and the concept of *mésalliance*. For a further consideration of the motif of the fallen woman in Victorian literature, see Reed 1975, 58-76.

Victorian society. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* makes a philosophical point about the human condition, and the activated intertextual relationship with *Tess* offers a point of comparison. It is my assumption that the juxtaposition of Hardy's and Fowles's novels aims at challenging the belief in *neo-Darwinian fate* that *Tess* exemplifies.

Peter R. Morton has analysed *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as drawing on the conventions of the late nineteenth-century naturalistic tragedy. He argues that neo-Darwinism gave Hardy "the authority for building a tragedy in classical form on a foundation of scientific empiricism."[449] According to Morton, central concepts of the Aristotelian theory of tragedy have new contents in Hardy's novel. Most importantly, the concept of the tragic flaw, *hamartia*, is biological as it describes something connected with instinct and inheritance. Morton explains that Tess's hamartia is her "alternate impulsiveness" and "weak dreaminess," and, as the novel's narrator hints, "the slight incautiousness of character inherited from her race." Tess is ignorant of the "mindless heredity that control her motivation and impulses," and the fact that people are not the masters of their fates is gradually revealed to both the reader and Tess in *anagnorisis*, the transition from ignorance to knowledge.[450]

In *Life and Work*, Thomas Hardy defines tragedy as follows: "[T]ragedy may be created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe or of human institutions."[451] As Morton notes, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is an effort to show that these forces form a single rival to human endeavour. In other words, in *Tess*, both heredity, i.e. biological facts, "things inherent in the universe," and the social environment determine indisputably the fate of an individual. Moreover, Tess's intelligence and education do not liberate her. In other words, the fact that Tess is educated only serves to emphasise the tragic picture of her fate, since the novel shows that there is no way for an individual to escape the united forces of heredity and social environment.

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[449] Morton 1991, 432.

[450] Ibid., 438.

[451] Quoted in ibid.

Hardy's novel is thus associated with the cultural-historical situation characterised by the essentially neo-Darwinist theory of degeneration. The theory claimed that evolution could sometimes and against Darwin's original supposition, happen in reverse order: Darwin's pupil Edwin Ray Lankester claimed in his treatise *Degeneration. A Chapter in Darwinism* from 1880 that some parasites are more vital than their hosts.[452] Neo-Darwinism strongly affected the cultural climate and social theories of the late nineteenth century. It strengthened the idea that society as a whole had fallen into a profound state of decadence.[453]

In contrast to the fate of Tess, Sarah Woodruff finally succeeds in finding her place and relative freedom in Victorian society. As the situation of young Sarah resembles closely Tess's, it is more reasonable to claim that the story of Sarah's success parodies the tragedy founded on scientific empiricism, the story of Tess.[454]

This interpretation is also strengthened by the intertextual analysis of the meaning of Sarah's nickname, "Tragedy."[455] The nickname, conferred by the people of Lyme, can be seen to allude to Tess's tragic fate in Hardy's novel.[456] From this point of view, the naming of Sarah as "Tragedy" can be meaningfully

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[452] Ibid., 438.

[453] Trotter 1993, 111-112.

[454] James Acheson has studied *FLW* as a tragedy in which Sarah could be viewed as "either a tragic antagonist or a tragic heroine" (1998, 40). However, Acheson thinks that the tragic flaw of Sarah is her inauthenticity and not her genotype. He does not, in other words, take into account the Victorian conventions of biological tragedy or that *FLW* consciously parodies these conventions.

[455] *FLW*, 12.

[456] This nickname could also be seen to refer to Coventry Patmore's (1823-96) poem 'The Tragedy of Tragedies' that portrays the loss of virtue as the worst thing that might happen to a woman in Victorian society. The poem reflects, thus, the weight the Victorians placed on virginity. Another Victorian text that couples the concept of tragedy with the fall of a woman is John Clare's (1793-1864) poem 'A Maid's Tragedy.' It expresses sympathy for the fallen woman as do some other Victorian texts, such as *David Copperfield*, as mentioned above (n448), or

interpreted as an expression of the scientifically determined world-view of the mid-Victorian era. In particular Dr Grogan and his diagnosis of Sarah as a woman who suffers from hysteria and obscure melancholia represents the naturalistic world-view.[457] Dr Grogan's diagnosis is a report of the inhuman, biological forces that are expected to determine Sarah's fate as they do Tess's. In other words, melancholia is considered to be Sarah's biological, inherited hamartia in the novel. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* violates the conventions of naturalistic tragedy as it undermines the nineteenth-century belief in a strong biological and hereditary determinacy of the woman psyche, a determinacy that Sarah's nickname "Tragedy" reinforces.[458] As regards the historical content of Fowles's parodic satire, it reveals that Victorian science as a *grand récit* of the century strenghtened belief in arbitrary biological fatalism and thus tried to limit the psychological alterity of women to a single totalitarian explanatory frame.

5.3 Rewriting Victorian Sexuality

> Of course, Paul Michel was a novelist and Foucault was a philosopher, but there were uncanny links between them. They were both preoccupied with marginal, muted voices. They were both captivated by the grotesque, the bizarre, the daemonic.[459]

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853). (See Reed 1975, 60, 72.)

[457] *FLW*, 134-135.

[458] Victorian science is thus presented in the novel as making as rapidly assumptions from appearances as the Victorian middle-class in general (cf. Mr Forsyth's comment in *FLW*, 34: "The lower classes are not so scrupulous about appearances as ourselves"). This Victorian propensity finds its expression also in other Victorian fiction, such as George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1860) or Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) (see DeVitis and Palmer 1974, 93).

[459] Duncker 1997, 6.

Sexuality is a famous subject in the new historical novels that deal with the Victorian era. In these narratives the representation of sexuality repeatedly raises questions concerning the abuse of power, the inequality of the sexes and social injustice. For example, both Carey's *Jack Maggs* and Atwood's *Alias Grace* include descriptions of distorted Victorian sexual practices, such as the sexual abuse of female servants.

The French Lieutenant's Woman also rewrites Victorian sexuality. The novel is an example of the way the sexual revolution of the 1960s is displayed in the historical novel of its time. Nevertheless, we reach a more accurate picture of the novel's treatment of the subject if we compare the novel with other historical documents from the 1960s and '70s, with scientific or historiographical accounts of nineteenth-century sexuality, or with the representations of love in Victorian literature proper. [460]

In the following I shall concentrate on reading the novel side by side with Foucault's description of Victorian sexuality in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (*Histoire de la sexualité*), *La Volonté de savoir* (1976, "the will to knowledge"[461]). *La Volonté de savoir* is especially interesting in this context as it was published only seven years after *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Thus, it is not only a historiographical account of Victorian sexuality but also a textual document from the same cultural period as the novel.

The representation of Victorian sexuality in Fowles's novel has naturally been examined before, but there are surprisingly few studies that compare it with Foucault's views.[462] Suffice it to say that it is not until recently that the historicity

[460] For recent discussion of the treatment of sexuality in Victorian fiction, see e.g. Allen 1993, Barrecca 1990, or Davis 1993.

[461] The name of the book, *La Volonté de savoir*, is a translation of Nietzsche's concept of "the will to knowledge." For a detailed discussion of Nietzsche's critical attitude towards Aristotle's notion of the pleasure of knowledge as universal and natural, see Foucault 1994a, 240-244.

[462] For example, John Neary gives over one chapter of his monograph *Something and Nothingness: The Fiction of John Updike and John Fowles* (1992) to the subject, but he does not mention Foucault at all in the book. M. Keith Booker has paid attention to the similarities between the way Fowles and Foucault treat sexuality as a form of transgression. However, the

of Foucault's view has been acknowledged in this context. David W. Landrum suggests in his article "Sarah and Sappho: Lesbian reference in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*" that Fowles's novel already portrays those mechanisms of power that Foucault later was to present in *La Volonté de savoir*.[463] He states, in particular, that Fowles's novel anticipates Foucault's notion of the hysterization of the female body, though unfortunately he mentions this only in passing.[464]

If we examine more closely the relationship between the treatment of Victorian sexuality in Fowles's novel and Foucault's *La Volonté de savoir*, two interrelated questions emerge: first, are the accounts of Victorian sexuality in Fowles's novel of the same kind as in Foucault's treatise, and second, does Fowles's novel really anticipate *La Volonté de savoir*?[465]

As is well known, *La Volonté de savoir* revises the notion that the Victorian era was silent on sexual matters. Contradicting the widely-held belief in Victorian repressiveness, Foucault argues that the idea about silent Victorians is a modern

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starting point of his article "What We Have Instead of God" (1991) is Foucault's treatise "A Preface to Transgression" and not *The History of Sexuality*. William John Stephenson has applied Foucauldian discourse analysis to his reading of Fowles's novel. He maintains, for instance, that the novel portrays love as a historical, circumstantial matter and not as a universal as has been suggested before (1996, 62). Yet his examination of the novel's representation of sexuality remains incomplete.

[463] Landrum 2000, 65. I offered the same argument at the seminar of the Finnish Literary Research Society, Kirjallisuudentutkijain Seura, in January 2000, but felt somewhat uncertain. However, when I found Landrum's comment in his article which came out two months later, I felt more reassured: his analysis gave support to my observation, and encouraged me to carry on with my study.

[464] Ibid.

[465] It must be remembered that I am here concerned exclusively with those views Foucault presents in *La Volonté de savoir* about Victorian sexuality. Therefore, the changes that occur later in Foucault's thought are not taken into account. It is especially important to note that in the two latter parts of *History of Sexuality* (*L'Usage des plaisirs*, 1984 and *Le Souci de soi*, 1984) Foucault pays more attention to those mechanisms through which people are capable of recognising and making themselves subjects of sexuality and thus complements his view of the relation between the self and external power.

invention. He points out that along with the specialization of the sciences in the nineteenth century there took place a "discursive explosion," a multiplication of the discourses concerning sexuality. The uniform medieval discourse of repentance was shattered, and sexuality became a major subject in demography, biology, medicine, psychiatry, morals, pedagogics, and political critique. Moreover, science carried out the project of minutely classifying all manifestations of sexuality, both "normal" and "perverse." The increased scientific output of sexual knowledge and definitions constructed a set of morals and rules of behaviour that were observed in community life. The discursive explosion is, according to Foucault, also an indication of the removal of power from the church to the institutions of state in the nineteenth century.

The French Lieutenant's Woman explores at least three Victorian discourses on sexuality–artistic, scientific, and theological. As I shall show in the following this indicates that a similar way of thinking, the will to sexual knowledge, dominated these different regions of nineteenth-century English culture. In this way the novel expresses the idea already put forward by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les choses*, 1966) that a law of a certain unconscious code of knowledge determines each historical period.[466]

Each of these different areas of culture has its own representative in the novel. Victorian art is represented especially by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, one of the leading figures of the group, and her sister Christina play an essential role in the plot as they offer Sarah Woodruff a decent job as the Brotherhood's amanuensis and model.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood stands for artistic and cultural emancipation in the novel. The Pre-Raphaelites were known for their critical attitude towards Victorian academic painting, whose cradle was the renowned and influential art school, the Royal Academy. In the novel attention is particularly paid to the effort of the Pre-Raphaelites to accept nature in art, an effort that clearly countered the classical paradigm promulgated by the Royal Academy. The tendency towards

[466] Foucault 1994c, ix-xi

nature is interpreted in the novel to have meant not only a striving for a naturalist expression in art but also an effort to admit sexuality.[467]

Nevertheless, the novel appreciates rather more the aspirations of the Pre-Raphaelites than their final achievements. For instance, the narrator esteems their naturalistic tendencies, but maintains that the incompleteness of their aspirations is clearly revealed if their works are compared with the paintings by John Constable (1776-1837) or Samuel Palmer (1803-81), works that combine naturalism with inner experiences.[468] It is essential in this context that in the novel the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood stands for *kinesis*, the power of change, as opposed to *stasis*, a condition of cultural and social stagnation.[469] The novel thus portrays the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as an alternative Victorian movement, and not as an ideal in every respect. This principle of historical relativity has to be taken into account when we evaluate the novel's representations of power, sexuality and women.

In the novel the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood represents the positive side of power mentioned in *La Volonté de savoir*. Foucault maintains that "[w]here there is power there is resistance."[470] Yet the form of manifestation of this resistance is always made possible and regulated by the *episteme* of the historical period in question.[471] Thus, both Foucault and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* make the claim that the forms of power and resistance are historically conditioned. Indeed, Sarah's body is still institutionalized at the end of the novel since she appears only as a marginal character in Rossetti's house. Yet, it must be emphasised that the novel does not even aim at portraying a situation where a Victorian woman would

[467] *FLW*, 154. The Pre-Raphaelites aroused suspicion among the "honourable" Victorians, and an anonymous critic even called the group "The Fleshly School of Poetry" (Doughty 1960, 486-487, cf. *FLW*, 378). For a discussion on the treatment of nature in Fowles's texts, see Aubrey 1999.

[468] *FLW*, 154.

[469] Cf. *A*, 157.

[470] *VS*, 95.

[471] Ibid.

anachronistically have a degree of freedom or a cultural position possible only for the modern woman. The novel instead aims to show that even the most emancipated groups during the Victorian period could not carry the liberation of women to a completely satisfying conclusion.[472]

The two other Victorian discourses on sexuality mentioned earlier, science and religion, are similarly seen in the novel as characterized by the will to sexual knowledge. If we remember that science and religion were the *grands récits* of the nineteenth century, that is, efforts to explain the world in its totality, it is easier to understand that these apparently conflicting discourses executed similar operations of discursive power. Moreover, Michel Foucault claims that the Victorian scientific interest in human sexuality was in fact an extension of the turning of desire into discourse, which had been a feature of religious practices for centuries. The difference is that religious discourse had dealt only with private confessions, but in the nineteenth century science began to analyze, classify and define the forms of sexuality on a larger scale.[473]

Mrs Poulteney represents the narrow-mindedness of mid-century Evangelicalism in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Her character, which at first sight looks like a caricature, is nevertheless in accordance with the historical accounts of the Evangelicals of the period. According to F. K. Brown, mid-century Evangelicalism was characterised by "rigid, hard, mannerless pedantry", the "puritanical strictness and senseless rigour […] hardening doctrinaire

[472] I do not completely agree with Pamela Cooper when she criticizes the fact that Sarah does not gain complete independence at the end of the novel (1991, 11, 126-134). Cooper does not take into account the fact that the novel's picture of Victorian cultural conditions is historically sound precisely because the novel shows that the emancipation of women remained incomplete in nineteenth-century England.

[473] *VS,* 23**.** More recently, in his *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* Michael Mason notes that conflicting forces such as religious groups and free thinkers actually converged and strengthened each other in the Victorian period. He refers to Muriel Jeager's view that the puritan rigour of Victorian religion is an expression of the same emphasis on rationality that dominated the whole of nineteenth century culture (Mason 1994, 2).

convictions defying humaneness and good thinking."[474] Her looks and manners agree with the standard historical picture of the Evangelicals, who, according to Michael Mason, "embraced the principles of sobriety in dress and speech, strict observance of the Sabbath, close moral control of household activities [...], ostracizing of the sexually lax [...], and so on [...]."[475]

Essential in this context is the fact that Mrs Poulteney's passion to expose all the vices of her employees and protegees, such as the secrets of Sarah Woodruff, testifies to the Victorian will to sexual knowledge. Mrs Poulteney has, for example, her own spies (Mrs Fairley and her acquaintances) among the townspeople so that little can be kept secret from her.[476] Mrs Poulteney thus embodies the idea that Victorian religious practice was dominated by the desire to expose and control sexuality.

La Volonté de savoir also shows that the union of pleasure and power was characteristic of Victorian science. Foucault maintains that the Victorian *scientia sexualis* worked in the nineteenth century at least partially in the manner of *ars erotica*, the erotic art, even if the scientific approach was in outward appearance positivistic. According to Foucault, the scientific production of truth "intensified, and even created its own intrinsic pleasures," the pleasures of exposing the truth and controlling it.[477] Fowles's novel surveys this alliance of pleasure and nineteenth-century sexual science with narrative ironies. Even if Darwinism and nineteenth-century psychology are portrayed in the novel as providing a corrective for a culture dominated by narrow-minded Evangelicalism, the novel draws an ironic picture of the excessive pride of Victorian intellectuals. The narrator mentions that Dr Grogan and Charles Smithson feel intellectual superiority towards other people and believe that they can understand everything because of the new sciences.[478] Thus, the novel represents the search for truth as

[474] Brown 1961; quoted in Mason 1994, 65.

[475] Mason 1994, 64.

[476] *FLW*, 57.

[477] *VS*, 71.

[478] *FLW*, 141-142.

a form of pleasure in a Foucauldian manner. Yet the narrator ironically adds that Sarah Woodruff still remains a mystery for Charles and Dr Grogan.[479] Indeed, Sarah is able to fool both Dr Grogan, the rest of the inhabitants of Lyme Regis and even the reader by creating a fictional, imaginative persona for herself. Dr Grogan makes a wrong diagnosis of Sarah's mentality, which shakes the reader's belief in Victorian psychology. Sarah's hysteria or *obscure melancholia*, as Dr Grogan defines her mental illness, has been part of her clever but desperate ploy.[480]

Consequently, the novel is a satirical portrayal of the hysterisation of Victorian women's bodies, a cultural phenomenon that Foucault briefly addresses in *La Volonté de savoir*. According to Foucault, the hysterisation of women's bodies is a threefold process.[481] Dr Grogan's analysis of Sarah's emotional state represents in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the first phase of the process, the analysis of the female body as entirely saturated with sexuality. Dr Grogan's proposal to incarcerate Sarah in a mental institution hints at the second phase, the medical treatment of the pathologically disturbed female body. The third phase of the process is making the female body an organic part of society; and in fact Sarah represents the "nervous woman," the negative image of the most visible form of hysterisation, the "Mother."

Another unmistakable similarity between *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *La Volonté de savoir* is the way they both criticise Freud's famous theory of sublimation. In his *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, 1930) Freud maintains that sublimation is the motive power of all cultural development and of the arts. He claims that communal life demands changes in man's original instincts. While living in civilisation, individuals direct their desires towards refined goals, and instincts thus become "ennobled."[482] This view

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[479] *FLW*, 142.

[480] For a more detailed (even if critical) discussion of the representation of hysteria in the novel, see Shields 1995.

[481] *VS*, 104.

[482] Freud 1963, passim.

of culture and civilisation as forces that shape and limit human instincts, consequently producing distress and frustration, also finds expression in Wilhelm Reich's *Die Massenpsychologie des Fascismus* (1933, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*) and Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1956).

Contrary to his predecessors, Michel Foucault rejects the idea of original sexuality which culture restricts and shapes. Instead, he approaches the way that "the putting into discourse" constitutes what people in different periods understand by sexuality. He does not accept Freud's idea that the repression of sexuality is the most essential feature of cultural development. According to Foucault, of greater significance is simply the desire to entice sexuality out, to examine it in detail, and thus regulate it.

Similarly, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* overtly calls Freud's theory of sublimation into question. According to the narrator, the theory falsely supports the idea that the participation in cultural activities suffocates sexuality. The narrator criticises this idea while maintaining that Victorian art gives evidence of the high interest the Victorians held for love and of the fact that they were just as sexual as contemporary people. Thus, sexual instincts, powerful as they are, do not vanish in times of energetic cultural development, they only find different forms of expression in cultural activities like the representation of love in the arts.[483] This notion recalls Foucault's idea that "there is not one but many silences," that is, a great variety of ways to speak about sexuality.[484] Similarly, the novel shows that the ennoblement of sexual instincts does not entail their radical renunciation as Freud inferred. In sum, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* anticipates Foucault's criticism of the Freudian theory of sublimation.

One of the main differences between *La Volonté de savoir* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is that Fowles's novel approaches sexuality from the point of view of an individual. It must be noted in this context that Foucault's notion of the relationship between an individual and power has been found to be

[483] *FLW*, 231-233.

[484] *VS*, 27.

problematic. Edward Said, for instance, has claimed that the Foucauldian reduction of the subject to general discursive practice seems to lead to social passivity. He remarks that "[r]esistance cannot equally be an adversarial alternative to power and a dependent function of it, except in some metaphysical, ultimately trivial sense."[485] In more practical terms, if human beings are not able to recognize the operations of power that control their lives they can neither reject, escape, nor challenge them. Moreover, Lois McNay points out that even though Foucault in *La Volonté de savoir* maintains that power is also a productive and positive matter and not only a means of repression,[486] in critical practice he approaches power as "a monolithic and inexorable force which saturates all social relations."[487] Foucault's idea about the hysterisation of the female body mentioned above is a good example of viewing power as a purely disciplinary instrument.[488]

Fowles's novel, on the other hand, still looks for the way an individual could escape the power of the discourses of a straitlaced historical era.[489] It asks how Sarah Woodruff can avoid the destiny prepared for her by the power relations of her society. Thus, regardless what seems like Foucauldian thematics of power, the novel portrays an individual expression of resistance. The novel offers the possibility that an individual could recognize the discursive practices and techniques of power, manipulate them, and aspire after a new cultural condition

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[485] Said 1983, 246.

[486] Similarly, Foucault claims in "Cours du 14 janvier 1976" that an individual is not mute material for the external power to impact upon, repress and destroy but rather that it is the effect of power that certain bodies, gestures and discourses are identified and constituted as individual (1994b, 180).

[487] McNay 1992, 43.

[488] Regardless of this criticism, Foucault's view about the positive side of power has been applied to the analysis of literature, see e.g. Mills 1991, 66-107. For Fowles's view about the relationship between the individual and the scientific method, see Fowles 1979, 51-68 and *T*, passim.

[489] The treatment of individuality in Fowles's literary texts is, however, paradoxical, see e.g. Conradi 1982, 16.

and personally more satisfying company, whatever the strictures of the social enviroment.

I will now return to the questions put at the beginning of this subchapter. The question about the similarity of Foucault's and Fowles's views can be answered quite simply that they are very similar, though not in every detail. I have tried to show that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* illustrates from various angles the way sexuality became part of discourse in the Victorian period.[490] The will to sexual knowledge and dominance is clearly shown in the novel to have reigned in diverse areas of the Victorian culture, in the arts, religion and science. Moreover, both texts renounce the repression hypothesis, which was the basis for the advocates of sexual revolution at the turn of the 1960s and '70s. So does Fowles precede Foucault?

Comparing Foucault and Fowles raises the question as to how philosophy and literature record or generate new ideas. Mikhail Bakhtin gives one of the most interesting answers to this question. According to Bakhtin, some ideas occasionally appear first, and sometimes even exclusively, in literature. For instance, Bakhtin claims that the modern historical consciousness originated along with the *Bildungsroman* of the eighteenth century, and thus a little earlier than it found its expression in philosophy.[491] Hence, Bakhtin's view emphasises the importance of the study of literature and literary genres (as forms of thinking) for the history of ideas or mentalities. If we apply Bakhtin's idea to our comparison of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *La Volonté de savoir,* it seems undeniable that Fowles pre-empts Foucault's reappraisal of Victorian sexuality and culture.

Nevertheless, the matter seems somewhat more complicated if we turn from the Bakhtinian point of view to Foucauldian discourse analysis. Indeed, both

[490] The novel also represents some other areas concerning Victorian sexuality that would deserve more attention, e.g., prostitution, journalism, sexual education, the speech and manners of servants, and so on, not to mention the Victorian novel proper that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* parodies.

[491] Bakhtin 1986, 26.

Fowles's and Foucault's works should be read as parts of the same discursive formation. It is quite clear that they are both influenced by the same archive and informed by the same *episteme* of the 1960s and '70s. For instance, both texts refer to the anonymous Victorian autobiography *My Secret Life* that Steven Marcus discussed in 1964 in his study of Victorian pornography *The Other Victorians*, and these kinds of references testify to the same cultural and textual background.[492] Most interestingly, both Fowles's and Foucault's representations of Victorian sexuality appeared at a time when the largely unexamined history of sexuality was beginning to be organised as a subject for research.[493] In short, to modify Foucault's own expression, time made both *La Volonté de savoir* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* possible.[494]

[492] See Marcus 1964. It would, of course, be interesting to compare both Foucault's and Fowles's views of sexuality more closely with those of other prominent intellectuals of the 1960s and '70s such as Kate Millett or Germain Greer, but this is beyond the scope of this chapter.

[493] Cf. Hunt 1992, 78.

[494] Cf. Foucault 1994c, 63.

CHAPTER 6: TODOROV'S PURE FANTASTIC IN *A MAGGOT*

As readers, we are already quite familiar with the postmodernist historical novel that includes elements of fantasy. For instance, Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*, 1967), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Günter Grass's *Der Butt* (1986), Christoph Ransmayr's *Die lezte Welt* (1988) and Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1991) are all examples of postmodernist novels that combine historical narration with supernatural occurrences. However, there are differences in the way postmodernist historical novels effect this combining, even if they have an element of playfulness in common. One of these ways is to use ambiguous narration and *the pure fantastic* defined by Tzvetan Todorov as a textual strategy. However, none of the novels mentioned above utilise pure fantastic as their central narrative method. Instead, they belong to the marvellous in that they do not question the real existence of the supernatural.[495] But, there are a number of other postmodernist novels that employ pure fantastic as a central textual strategy, and *A Maggot* is one of them.

[495] For a definition of the marvellous, see below Ch. 6.1.

This chapter analyses the way in which *A Maggot* creates a fantastic effect and the way it utilises narrative ambiguity thematically. My argument is that the novel exhausts the potentiality of Todorov's pure fantastic, but nevertheless makes it in an aesthetically and narratively subtle way. At the end of the chapter I shall show that this particular narrative strategy has found its expression in other British postmodernist historical novels of the 1980s, namely in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987). The comparative analysis is an effort to locate *A Maggot*'s place within postmodernist literature and to estimate the poetic and thematic reasons why this particular narrative strategy has become prevalent in postmodernist fiction.

6.1 Defining Ambiguous Narration and the Fantastic

Ambiguous narration is one of the textual strategies that make the reader of prose fiction uncertain and indecisive. The reader of a text applying this strategy is not able to decide whether the narrator is reliable or unreliable. In other words, there are texts that not only question the reliability of the narrator but also make the very act of deciding impossible. Consequently, the reader of an ambiguous narrative hesitates *ad infinitum* between two or more alternatives that mutually exclude each other. According to Rimmon-Kenan, the best known case of ambiguous narration is Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). James's story does not provide enough information for determining whether the governess is telling a true story of two haunted children, or whether her story is the result and proof of her mental illness.[496]

The fantastic (*le fantastique*) as defined by Todorov is one form of ambiguous narration. The implicit reader of a pure fantastic story hesitates between natural and supernatural explanation of a strange phenomenon. Moreover, it is typical for the pure fantastic that the story has one rational character who hesitates between

[496] Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 103, Rimmon 1977, passim.

these two possible explanations, even if this is not a necessary requirement. Furthermore, it is not possible to read a pure fantastic story as an allegory, or to make a poetic interpretation of it.[497]

There are many stories that occasionally create fantastic hesitation, but they do not belong to the pure fantastic. Todorov makes a distinction between the uncanny, the marvellous and the fantastic as literary genres. In the uncanny (*l'étrange*) the ghostly phenomenon is finally explained away according to some natural clarification, and in the marvellous (*le merveilleux*) the supernatural is accepted as such. Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is an example of the former and Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) of the latter. In the fantastic proper the hesitation never ends.[498]

Although the theory of the fantastic is convincing and practicable, Todorov does not give many historical examples of the genre. *The Turn of the Screw* is so far the best known example of the fantastic. Todorov's other example is Jacques Cazzotte's *Le diable amoureux* (1772), which leaves open whether the appearance of a women from another world is real or pure illusion.

Moreover, it should be remembered that there are different kinds of textual indecision and narrative ambiguity. Christine Brooke-Rose asserts that Henry James himself wrote other ambiguous texts besides *The Turn of the Screw* in which the ambiguity is not between supernatural and natural explanation (e.g., *The Lesson of the Master*, *The Figure in the Carpet*, and probably, *The Sacred Fount*). She also points out that modern fiction, such as Robbe-Grillet's novels, occasionally exploit total ambiguity.[499] Furthermore, a detective story can produce ambiguity and indeterminacy by offering several different possible solutions that leave the reader ultimately more or less guessing which is the right one. In that case it also breaks with the convention of the rational,

[497] Todorov 1975, 31-33.

[498] Ibid., 41-47.

[499] Brooke-Rose 1983, 65.

epistemological *quest* of classical detective fiction. This kind of metaphysical detective story gives no definite solution to the mystery it evokes.[500]

Finally, it is important to mention that not all contemporary scholars accept the view that *The Turn of the Screw* should be regarded as a classical example of narrative ambiguity and pure fantastic. For example, David Trotter argues that James's text is, after all, a ghost story *rather than* a madness story.[501] If Trotter is right, the story cannot be considered a testimonial of its narrator's mental disorder. This alternative is clearly unacceptable according to his way of reading, even though he is quite aware that the text seems to recommend this other mode of reading. It should also be noted that Trotter reaches his conclusion even though he is acquainted with the long history of interpretations of James's story.[502] What he suggests, then, is that after one hundred years of amazement it has now been definitively proven that the most satisfying way of reading the story is to read it as a ghost story.

Trotter's view has to be objected to. Even though his analysis of the nature of the horrors the children and the governess experience gives a unifying explanation for many details in the story, nothing in it can alter the fact that the story can likewise be read as a madness story. In other words, even if it is fortuitous to make an intelligent interpretation of one side of the story, this does not mean that it cannot be read according to the other possibility.

The text itself gives clues for both kinds of reading, even though one could find good reasons for reading it simply as a ghost story. In fact, Trotter argues that James's own remarks on the meaning of the text seem to strengthen one of the

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[500] See Ch. 7.

[501] Trotter 1993, 231-238.

[502] Trotter refers to Edmund Wilson's (1934) and Oscar Gargill's (1963) interpretations, in which James's novel is read as a story of madness, and to Shoshana Felman's (1977) reading that combines linguistics and psychoanalysis and considers the story an allegory of the passion for interpreting. Trotter's account is inadequate in that it makes no mention of Todorov's classification of the novel as ambiguous narrative (Trotter 1993, 231-232).

two alternatives.[503] However, it is clear that the interpreter should avoid here the trap of the intentional fallacy: a literary text is public property, and it means just what it can in a given language and different reading contexts. In other words, if the meaning of a text is bound to the meaning that the author wanted to give to it, this is made only according to a normative rule. So, the possibility of making an interpretation or a generic categorisation that differs from the author's way of reading his own story cannot be denied.

Trotter's interpretation is interesting because in the end it affirms that texts such as *The Turn of the Screw* are constructed to haunt everlastingly. They disturb readers, academic and non-academic, who seek closure, uniformity and unifying interpretations; they are the nightmares of lovers of simplicity. On the other hand, they issue a good challenge to the literary scholar who wants to define their structure, meaning and value without destroying their generic multiplicity and semantic indeterminacy with some inventive but reductive interpretation.

6.2 The Book of Revelations as a Subtext

A Maggot has many *intra- and homodiegetic* narrators. When questioned by an attorney, they all tell a different version of the mysterious disappearance of Mr Bartholomew in the Southwest of England in 1736. The novel resembles in structure Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), where every hearing of witnesses leads a step further in uncovering the truth. Nevertheless, the structure of Fowles's novel is different in one important aspect: unlike Collins's novel, *A Maggot* does not finally lay bare the mystery it has created.

Most of the intradiegetic narrators in the novel can be considered unreliable, since they do not seem to have genuine knowledge of Mr Bartholomew's disappearance. Moreover, their views clearly conflict with each other. The most important witness is the last one, Rebecca Lee, the future mother of Ann Lee, the

[503] Ibid., 231.

historical founder of the religious sect the Shakers. As is conventionally expected, the last witness's story ought to unravel the mystery, but this does not happen in Fowles's novel. Rebecca Lee is as untrustworthy as the other narrators at the same narrative (diegetic) level, even though she is the best eyewitness of the strange happenings.

To be precise, the unclosed nature of the *fabula* of the novel is the result of ambiguous narration. The reader, no more than the attorney and believer in the values of the Enlightenment, Mr Ayscough, is able to decide whether Rebecca is telling the truth about the mysterious disappearance of Mr Bartholomew or not. According to Rebecca Lee's own testimony, she has witnessed the appearance of Christ. Mr Ayscough does not openly believe in her, even though her story makes him somewhat uncertain. Mr Ayscough and the reader cannot definitively determine the value of Rebecca Lee's testimony, and therefore they both waver continuously between at least two different explanations, which is a sign of ambiguous narration.

Because the story makes the reader struggle awkwardly and endlessly between natural and supernatural explanations, *A Maggot* could be classified as a pure fantastic narrative. However, the supernatural takes on various forms in the novel. For instance, the modern reader identifies in some details of Rebecca's story indirect references to the appearance of a spaceship or a time machine. There are also allusions to Celtic beliefs and spiritual heritage in her story. Furthermore, David Jones, a former member of Mr Bartholomew's peculiar party, claims in his testimony that Rebecca had taken part in magical rituals as a bride of the devil. On the whole, then, the reader has many supernatural and abnormal explanations to choose from besides the rational one. This makes the story somewhat more complicated than the classical example of the fantastic, *The Turn of the Screw*, where fantastic hesitation is created by the potentiality of one kind of supernatural only. In other words, the postmodernist novel exhausts here the narrative potentiality of the fantastic.

I shall now concentrate mainly on analysing Rebecca Lee as a narrator and a character, and on the structure and content of her testimony, since it occupies a

central position in the novel. Thus, the approach will emphasise the Christian, Celtic and scientific mythologies as components of the fantastic.

Even though Rebecca has taken part in the events in the cave, and is, consequently, the only eyewitness of the mysterious events besides the disappeared Mr Bartholomew, her testimony is highly problematic. Her reliability as a narrator is suspect for several reasons: she has lied before; her story is subjectively coloured as the narratives of intradiegetic characters tend to be;[504] she is an uneducated woman of the people; she has taken part in a deception and a masque and might still act accordingly; her experiences might have been caused by the combined effect of narcotics and religious disposition; her testimony gives rise to contradictory interpretations; her knowledge is historically limited and she does not have the ability to see the modern connotations of her vision; and, finally, her testimony can be suspected on rational grounds after the manner of Henry Ayscough.

Nevertheless, even if her testimony might seem incredible in the literal sense of the word, nothing denies the possibility of reading it as an authentic theophanic experience.[505] This follows the fact that the novel, as a fantastic narrative, does not offer enough evidence to support any single line of interpretation in preference to any other. When read literally, that is, as Rebecca herself seems to interpret the experience, she has been witnessing the (dis)appearance of Jesus Christ.

Interestingly, the testimony of Rebecca's vision has several points of contact with the Book of Revelations. That is, the biblical story of the revelation of John is an important subtext of Rebecca's testimony. They resemble each other structurally in various ways. First, both begin with the appearance of a godly figure for a chosen person. Second, both contain a description of the dystopic

[504] See Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 103.

[505] See above Ch. 4.3.

future of the world (apocalypse is the appropriate word in the case of the Book of Revelations) and a description of the conditions in Paradise, even if in contradictory order. And third, both John and Rebecca are confronted with Jesus Christ at the end of their supernatural experiences: in the Book of Revelations, Christ speaks directly to John, and in *A Maggot*, Rebecca claims that she finally recognised the lineaments of Christ in Mr Bartholomew's face.[506]

There are also several other, more exact allusions to the Book of Revelations in *A Maggot*. Both Rebecca and John describe Paradise as a golden and resplendent town:

> 18 And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.[507]
>
> 21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.[508]
>
> Exceeding beautiful, like none upon this earth that I have seen or heard speak of. All built of white and gold, and everywhere was parks and plaisances [...].
>
> And among them, that joined all, fair great highways that seemed paved of gold [...].[509]

Both descriptions of Paradise also include a flourishing fruit-tree:

> And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

[506] *M*, 383.

[507] *BR*, 21: 18.

[508] *BR*, 21: 21.

[509] *M*, 372.

> 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on every side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.[510]
>
> For now we flew lower and lower, more close to this blessed land of June Eternal, and came so to rest upon the ground, in a meadow of grass and flowers. Where stood about a tree three waiting, two men and a woman to greet us.
>
> [...]
>
> I did run in the heavenly meadow, to take that fruit Holy Mother Wisdom did there offer toward me [...].[511]

Moreover, both narratives include a portrayal of an apocalypse, and they resemble each other in certain ways. In general, both the apocalypse of the Book of Revelations and the dystopia of Rebecca's vision are descriptions of an extreme earthly violence and destruction. They have plenty of similar details in common. One of the recurrent terms is 'blood,' as in the following sections:

> 12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;[512]
>
> [...] and the groans of the dying intermingled, blood and the cannons' smoke.[513]

[510] *BR*, 22: 1-2.

[511] *M*, 375-380.

[512] *BR*, 6: 12.

[513] *M*, 380.

> Yet twice I saw beyond the window, what seemed three moons that shone upon a scene of carnage [= bloodshed], and made all more dreadful by their light.[514]

The descriptions of the worldly destruction and of the makers of it correspond to each other:

> 7 And the shapes of the locust *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.
> 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.
> 10 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.[515]

> But stranger black marvels still: great carriages that bore cannon within, and went faster than the fastest horse; most swift and roaring winged lions, that flew as hornets in a rage, the which did drop great grenadoes upon their enemy and made untold destruction upon them–why, whole cities laid to ruin, like 'twas said London did look the morrow of the Great Fire.[516]

The beasts of the Book of Revelations appear thus also in Rebecca's story. Rebecca, though, does not provide a detailed description of the horrors she saw. Thus, her story is more or less a summary of her experience.

But what does it contribute to the thematics of Fowles's novel that the Book of Revelations is a subtext of *A Maggot*? It seems obvious that if Rebecca's story is interpreted to the letter, Rebecca is like an eighteenth-century John whose revelation is part of a Christian plan. Nevertheless, this does not take us very far

[514] *M*, 382.

[515] *BR*, 9: 7-10.

[516] *M*, 382.

if the deviations of Rebecca's story from the Book of Revelations are not taken into account.

Let us consider shortly the deviations before making an effort to decipher the semantics of the intertextual relationship. The deviations from the description of the apocalypse seem highly significant. The two most important ones are the following:

> (1) Rebecca's report of the horrors intentionally (that is, according to the novel's *intentio operis*) hint at modern warfare, but the Book of Revelations does this only unintentionally, and
> (2) Rebecca's testimony of the horrors can be seen as open criticism of technological evolution and, ultimately, of the inheritance of the Enlightenment.

Thus, the reader can easily recognise in Rebecca's testimony the horrors of modern warfare. It should be noticed, however, that the Book of Revelations and Rebecca's narrative function similarly: both encourage anachronistic interpretations that refer to the similarities between the horrors of the Book of Revelations and modern warfare. The people anterior to the nineteenth century, and certainly not the contemporaries of John or Rebecca, were unable to perform such interpretations, i.e. they were unable to see similarities between the beasts of the Book of Revelations and the future's instruments of war. In other words, interpretations that modernise the content of the Book of Revelations and Rebecca's vision are based on connotations intelligible only for modern readers. Moreover, in the light of these modernising interpretations, John and Rebecca are seen as untrustworthy narrators who lack the ability to understand and the words to accurately convey what they possibly saw.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the respective connotative technique of the Book of Revelations and *A Maggot*. The modern connotations of the Book of Revelations are unexpected and unintentional, as they have become possible inferences only in our times. On the contrary, the connotative technique of

Fowles's novel is altogether conscious. That is, *A Maggot* imitates consciously the unintentional narrative strategy of the Book of Revelations, its technique of sudden and unforeseen connotations. That is, in Fowles's novel, the technique of modern connotations is a deliberate adaptation of the similar accidental technique of the Book of Revelations.

Moreover, *A Maggot* deliberately makes it easy for the reader to make anachronistic assumptions, as Rebecca's description of the horrors has a more exact modern expression than that of John. For instance, the reader might easily recognise an iconic view from the Vietnam war in the following description:

> A. Yea, there was a girl-child of fourteen years run from a house put to fire by soldiers, most sorely burnt therein, her clothes aflame, […][517]

It is in fact quite difficult not to interpret some parts of Rebecca's vision as distorted but exact pictures of nineteenth-century warfare. Another example is the winged lions that drop "great grenadoes" over the cities, a picture almost impossible not to associate with modern bombers in action.

Thus it seems that Rebecca has seen into the nineteenth-century reality. This interpretation is sustained by the fact that Rebecca herself perceives that the revealed plagues have their origin in her own time and are, thus, of human design, a logical consequence of human actions:

> And else, great towers of smoke and flame that burnt all below, made hurricane and earthquake where they rose, visions so dire they make this world we live in seem kind by the comparison. [518] Yet do I know all its seeds may be found in ours, alas all we lack are their devilish arts and

[517] *M*, 381; cf. Tarbox 1988, 152.

[518] This paragraph seems to be a description of the launch of an atom bomb or some other modern bomb with similarly devastating effects.

> ingenuity to be the same, as cruel also. […] 'Twas a prophecy; so may this world become.[519]

Rebecca's vision is, thus, like an interpretation of twentieth-century life made by an individual from the eighteenth century.

Through this kind of unrealistic and anachronistic narrative pattern, the novel draws a parallel between two distant historical periods and sets forth a question of historical progress. This is again one of the ways it applies the accidental rhetorical effects of the Book of Revelations. The picture Rebecca's dystopia gives of the twentieth century is in fact a radical criticism of the reverse side of technological development. The dystopia is even more horrifying than the apocalypse of the Book of Revelations, since it does not give any hope for the innocents as the Book of Revelations does:

> 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.[520]

And from *A Maggot*:

> [T]here was no love; all cruelty, killing, pain. All meted upon innocents, upon women and children, and nothing to end it.[521]

Yet Rebecca's testimony offers an alternative to the dystopia. If Rebecca's vision of Paradise is interpreted in profane mode and not literally, it is like a picture of a wealthy, green and democratic society of the future. In other words, historical progress can lead to two alternative futures, good and bad.[522] The apple

[519] *M*, 382.

[520] *BR*, 9: 4.

[521] *M*, 381.

[522] Of course, they could also exist simultaneously, for example in different parts of world, but

Holy Mother Wisdom offers to Rebecca in Paradise seems to be the symbol of this possibility to choose and of becoming aware of the duality of reason. Hence *A Maggot* probes the question of knowledge by situating historically the question of the tree of the knowledge good and evil in Genesis.[523] In other words, *A Maggot* creates a connection between the theological question of the nature of knowledge and the philosophical and cultural problem of eighteenth-century reason and its legacy.

On the other hand, the Paradise episode can be alternatively interpreted in the context of the semantic relationship between the Book of Revelations and *A Maggot*. In that case, the apple of *A Maggot* is the fruit of the Book of Revelations that offers the nations their health: "[A]nd the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations."[524] In this semantic context, then, the apple is again the symbol of wisdom, this time of green wisdom, a request for the people to appreciate nature and its fruits.

The strength of this cultural criticism lies, though, not in the originality of its content. On the contrary, there is nothing particularly new in the criticism of the problems technological evolution has caused, even if the emphasis on ecological thematics is topical. The power of this criticism is in the originality of the rhetoric. The novel approaches its subject with a fresh narrative design, introduces an intradiegetic narrator who, for some reason or other, as it seems, is able to predict the future[525] and creatively applies the accidental rhetoric of the Book of Revelations.

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that does not seem the point.

[523] *M*, 380. The novel seems here to accord with Foucault's idea that because historical development is casual offering constantly several different possibilities and appearing determined only in retrospect, there always remains the possibility of changing its course (see Gutting 1994, 10).

[524] *BR*, 22: 2.

[525] This use of prominent anachronistic narration can be seen as an extended form of a similar pattern in Barth's *Letters* (see above Ch. 3.2).

6.3 The Appraisal of Mystery: Celtic Mythology, Stonehenge, and the Values of the Enlightenment

> Mystery, or unknowing, is energy. As soon as a mystery is explained, it ceases to be a source of energy.[526]

> Still today it is not what we know of Stonehenge that haunts us, but what we do not and shall never know. […] Choosing not to know, in an increasingly 'known', structured, ordained, predictable world, becomes almost a freedom, a last refuge of the self.[527]

> [Existentialism] has the virtue of restoring to man his sense of the primal mystery surrounding all things, a sense of mystery from which the glittering world of his technology estranges him, but without which he is not truly human.[528]

The Celtic mythological elements are another component of the novel's fantastic narration. Rebecca's testimony in particular contains a relatively large amount of Celtic mythic symbolism. Rebecca does not appear to have any awareness of the Celtic connection of her vision as she seems to interpret her experience solely in Christian terms. This shows clearly how the novel suggests several kinds of decodings that seem to give different meanings for the mysterious occurrences.[529] In the following I shall explore the Celtic symbolism of *A Maggot* and its thematic function in the novel.

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[526] *A*, 27.

[527] *ES*, 9, 125.

[528] Barrett 1958, 244.

[529] The symbolism of the novel is manifold. For instance, the woman in silver could also be interpreted as an incarnation of Cybele, the ancient Greek mother-goddess of nature and fertility. In the legend of Attis and Cybele violets grow in the blood of the mutilated Attis; in *A Maggot* they blossom in the mouth of Dick some days after his death by hanging (cf. Tarbox 1988, 145).

Let us begin from the Celtic mother goddess that appears in Rebecca's testimony. When Rebecca meets the woman in silver for the second time, she appears in the triad form of existence:

> Then further marvel, 'twas plain they was mother and daughter, and daughter's daughter again. Thus it seemed the one woman in her three ages, so like were their features despite their different years.[530]

Later, Rebecca notes that these women became merged in one person again.[531] It is not difficult to recognise in this tripartite figure the connection to Celtic mythology in which the threefold goddess is the major divinity.[532] These Celtic goddesses, titled *Matres* or *Matronas* in Gaulish, seem to correspond in the wider context of Indo-European mythology to the ancient religions' fertility goddesses, like the Indian Vishnu.[533] The remaining Celtic monuments where the "mothers" appear most often in groups of three, indicate that they were primarily concerned with fertility and childbirth, and that they played a central part in the Celtic culture:

> [T]he group of three mother goddesses […] was obviously used to express, in artistic terms, a concept inherent to Celtic mythology, that of a threefold goddess concerned with fecundity and childbirth, and sometimes war. [T]he goddesses may have different individual features such as cornucopias, fruits, bread or babies, or merely appear in outline […]. They may also appear as the *deae nutrices*, the 'nursing mothers', with babies playing about their feet. […] [I]n these trios of goddesses we find an

[530] *M*, 365.

[531] Ibid., 366.

[532] Surprisingly, the Celtic symbolism of the novel has not been studied in academic treatises before, although even Walter Miller Jr did refer in his review of the book in *The New York Times* in September 1985 (Miller 1985) to the novel's tripartite figure as a Celtic triad.

[533] Mac Cana 1968, 48 and Ellis 1995, 127.

> iconographic statement of a fundamental Celtic belief in the threefold power of divinity.[534]

Interestingly, Fowles also acknowledges the importance of the threefold goddess for the Celtic religion in his *The Enigma of Stonehenge*:

> Their [the Celts] two principal deities seem to have been a triadic mother-goddess—white virgin, red wife, black crone, as in Minoan Crete and ancient Greece—and a warrior sun-god (corresponding to Apollo) called Lugh.[535]

According to Fowles, the individual attributes, different ages and colours of the mother-goddess, also characterise the tripartite silver woman of *A Maggot*:

> […] the oldest ["black crone"] bore a posy of flowers of darkest purple, near to black; and the youngest ["white virgin"] as I say, of purest white; and her mother ["red wife"] flowers of red, like blood.[536]

The allusion in *A Maggot* to the particular passage of *The Enigma of Stonehenge* clearly proves that it is relevant to interpret the tripartite women figure of *A Maggot* as originating in the spiritual culture of the Celts. As the reader becomes aware of the Celtic symbolism contained in this example he or she might be tempted to interpret some other, maybe less evident, symbolic passages of the novel in conformity to Celtic mythology.

It is significant, moreover, that *A Maggot* activates *The Enigma of Stonehenge* as one of its most significant subtexts through the allusion. Thus, the allusion indicates lucidly that *The Enigma of Stonehenge* is not only an excellent

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[534] Ross 1996, 267. Cf. Mac Cana 1968, 47-48: "They [the 'mothers'] carry baskets of fruits, cornucopias, babies and other clear symbols of their connection with earthly and human fecundity."

[535] *ES*, 108.

[536] *M*, 365.

introduction to the history of the monument and to the numerous theories, old and new, concerning its origin, and a fine photograph book–with Larry Brukoff's photographs–about one of the most famous relics of England's prehistory. It functions also as a vital subtext for Fowles's fictional works. At any rate, *The Enigma of Stonehenge* has remarkable explanatory power for a reading of *A Maggot*: it offers devices, as we have already seen, for interpreting the mythological figures and symbols of the novel, guides the reader to the cultural and social background of the novel's historical setting, proposes a point of comparison for the whole structure of the novel, and supports its thematic analysis. I shall inevitably return to this intertextual connection from time to time in the following.

Another point of contact with Celtic mythology is the concept Rebecca uses to refer to Heaven, *June Eternal*:

> A. […] All green, as high summer. And the sun shone on all, like to June eternal. So now do I call this happy land that we was shown.
> Q. You call it how, mistress?
> A It is June Eternal.[537]

The connection is not as clear as in the case of the tripartite goddess, but nevertheless, the concept of June Eternal can be seen to refer to the heaven of Celts, *Tir na n'Og*, the Land of Youth, where there is a sunny pastoral afternoon in perpetuity:

> However, the Celtic Other World is not only that one we are so frequently offered, with its dim forests where brambles snatch at the legs, where barefanged creatures howl and sinister castles emerge out of the mist. To the Celts must go the credit for creating the most desirable of all paradises, Tir na n'Og, the Land of Youth, where the sunbeams fall dappled through

[537] *M*, 373.

> the leaves of trees, where birds sing, and streams tinkle in an endless summer's afternoon.[538]

Moreover, the tree that dominates the meadow in Rebecca's vision of Paradise can also be seen to refer to Celtic mythology. The cult of trees was widespread in Celtic cultures. The significance of the sacred trees and groves for the Celtic tribes is well-recorded, even if the druids' association with the oak, the most famous of the holy trees, has not been proven beyond reasonable doubt. In Irish tradition there is a special term for the sacred tree–*bile*. Moreover, it has been suggested that each Celtic tribe had its own tribal tree that stood at the centre of the tribal territory and that embodied the security and integrity of the tribe. The cutting of the sacred tree was a gesture to shame and demoralise the enemy, as the tree was both talisman and *crann bethadh*, "tree of life," for the tribes. Individual trees and selected groves of trees also served as sacred sites where religious rites, like the inauguration of tribal kings, were performed.[539] Thus, from the point of view of Celtic mythology, it is no surprise that the meeting between Rebecca and the people of the Otherworld takes place under a tree that symbolises life, fertility and integrity.

That the cave is the site of important mystical events in the novel can, similarly, be interpreted in the context of Celtic culture and mythology. *The Enigma of Stonehenge*, as the subtext of *A Maggot*, hints in this direction as it refers to the Roman documents of Celtic culture:

> The mother-goddess and the sun-god do not suggest any great discontinuity from the past, or no more than there is forward with the arrival of Christ and the Virgin Mary, but all the Roman writers bear witness to the fact that Druids' holy places were usually in caves or groves.[540]

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[538] Rutherford 1987, 21.

[539] Mac Cana 1968, 48-49 and Ross 1996, 59-65, 85.

[540] *ES*, 108.

It should be remembered, though, that the Roman writers are relatively untrustworthy interpreters of the Celtic customs and beliefs. The word used to describe their documentary style is *interpretatione romana*: they were inclined to read the customs of the Celts through their own political and religious ideology.[541] Yet Fowles is right in claiming that the Roman writers mention the cave as one of the sacred places of the Druids. For instance, Pomponius Mela notes that the Druids used to gather to instruct their disciplines "in secret either in a cave or secluded valley."[542] In sum, thus, there is enough evidence for the "Celtic" reading of the cave episode, even if the historical accuracy of the information concerning the cave as a ritual site is less evident. Within the current interpretative context, then, the cave in *A Maggot* appears to be a sacred Celtic ritual place and a passage to the Otherworld.

Rebecca's ablution by the mountain spring forms another symbolic passage of the novel that can be interpreted according to Celtic mythology.[543] Ross notes that it is well attested through archaeological findings that springs, wells and rivers are of "first and enduring importance as a focal point of Celtic cult practice and ritual."[544] Moreover, Ellis considers it likely that ritual purification and baptism were widespread in the Celtic culture.[545] It has also been presumed that the Celts believed that water sources were entrances to the Otherworld.[546] Equally important, the Celtic mother-goddesses have an obvious association with water, which is a consequence of their apparent connection with fertility.[547] Thus, Rebecca's ablution might be regarded as a part of the preparatory ritual for her

[541] Cf. Ross 1996, 38 and passim.

[542] Quoted in Ellis 1995, 157.

[543] *M*, 218-221.

[544] Ross 1996, 46

[545] Ellis 1995, 133.

[546] Rutherford 1987, fig. 8. Cf. Ross 1996, 50-51: "It is clear that the early Celtic peoples regarded all such places [wells, springs, pools, lakes, pits, and shafts] as entrances to the otherworld, and the literatures of the Celtic world support this supposition."

[547] Ross 1996, 46-47.

encounter with the mother-goddess and for Mr Bartholomew's entrance to the Otherworld.

Moreover, the date of Rebecca's mystical experience, the 1st of May, is the day for the celebration of the May Queen, a celebration that has its origin in pagan Celtic rituals. The ceremonies that are performed even today in Edinburgh, the modern Celtic capital, are ecstatic and overtly sexual. In the fertility ritual the May Queen walks through the "good fire" that signifies the victory of light over darkness, life over death. It is noteworthy that Rebecca Lee is clothed as the May Queen ("As a May queen upon that day, all in white linen, cambric, ribbands, I know not, as fine as fivepence"[548]) when she enters the cave and that the pagan rituals of the cave resemble the ecstatic May Queen fertility rituals of the Celtic world.[549]

The Stonehenge that appears both in David Jones's and Rebecca Lee's testimony does not allude to Celtic culture as such but rather to the Romantic interpretations of it as the temple of the Druids. Of course, David Jones interprets the nightly ritual around the shrine according to the popular imagination of his time. In his eyes, the question is of a cult ceremony of witches that leads to the appearance of the Devil. Nevertheless, the Romantic speculations of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquarians of the monument are not to be forgotten, as the intertextual connection to *The Enigma of Stonehenge* suggests this line of interpretation.

For the understanding of the overall role of the Celtic symbolism in the novel, it seems vital to examine the position of the monument in the poetic structure of the text. As Stonehenge is like an enigma that has not been thoroughly resolved, i.e. a monument that offers material for several kinds of scientific and speculative theories as to its original function, it is like an illustration of the textual strategy, the poetics of mystery, that has been chosen for the novel. I am not suggesting that Fowles's text resembles the ruin in that it would be "like some very ancient

[548] *M*, 219.

[549] *M*, 260.

and corrupt text, of which one can decipher just enough to be sure it is very important, but never enough to establish exactly what it is saying."[550] Instead, I suggest that the resemblance between *A Maggot* and Stonehenge is based on the fact that *A Maggot* produces different kinds of interpretations for the mysterious happenings it portrays, the Stonehenge episode, the disappearing of Mr Bartholomew, the hanging of Dick Thurlow, or the appearance of the woman in silver: *A Maggot* is a text that erects different and incompatible explanations of the world it portrays (some are made by the characters, and the reader is justified in adding some others), and similarly, Stonehenge has always resisted any final definitive explanation. The plot of the novel remains eternally open just as the truth of Stonehenge has remained concealed, at least for the time being. Thus Stonehenge can be regarded as a symbolic *mise en abyme*, or *mirror text* for the overall ambiguous narrative structure of the novel, the structure of recurring fantastic hesitation.[551]

As a symbol of ambiguity and otherness, Stonehenge is connected to the novel's theme of indeterminacy. The established intertextual connection to *The Enigma of Stonehenge* proposes a reading that takes into account Fowles's views of the importance of the Romantic speculations about the history and functions of the monument. Fowles asserts in the essay that Williams Stukeley's *Stonehenge, A Temple Restor'd to British Druids* from 1740 was one of the first messengers of Romanticism. He emphasises that the fanatic worshipping of rationality inevitably led in the eighteenth century to a countervailing trend that was realised in the bardic worshipping of ruins.[552] If the novel is read in line with this speculation, Stonehenge seems to represent the ascendancy of Romantic thought and imagination in the novel. In other words, the old ruin serves as a symbol for Romantic thought and the suggested inadequacies of pure reason, or in more general terms, for every effort, whether Romanticist, existentialist[553] or post-

[550] *ES*, 9.

[551] For the theory of *mise en abyme*, see e.g. Bal 1985, 138-146 and Dällenbach 1989, passim.

[552] *ES*, 9.

[553] It has been shown that the existentialist movement is counter-Enlightenment, because it

structuralist, to counter pure rationalism and the universalising principles of the Enlightenment.

Moreover, Fowles regards the defence of religious feeling as another manifestation of this Romantic counteraction. Consequently, he equates Stukeley's archaeological enterprise with the evangelical aspirations of John Wesley, Whitehead and other contemporary dissenting preachers in *The Enigma of Stonehenge*:

> Stukeley's Druids and their primitive purity were to colour the most vital and historychanging aspect of his century: the movement of the Dissent. As Stukeley rode and rode during the first three decades of the century in search of lost ruins, so a little later were men like the Wesleys and Whitehed to ride in their own evangelical pursuit of ruined souls and lost religious sentiment. John Wesley's incomparable power as preacher seems to have derived not from any particular oratorical skill but from the intense conviction he managed to put behind, or in, his habitually quiet voice; and something of the same is true of Stukeley .[554]

Thus, *The Enigma of Stonehenge* offers knowledge of the historical events coinciding with the ones portrayed in the novel proper. In effect, it encourages the reader to fulfil imaginatively the picture of the novel's historical background with these matters. However, thematically it is most interesting that the epilogue of *A Maggot* proposes that the dissenting religious movements of John Wesley

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"rejects the ordered universe of both theism and the scientific perspective: all such ordered constructions betray actual human experience; they are impositions–as Nietzsche recognised, impositions reflecting a desire to control and master the chaos of lived reality. […] [E]xistentialism values the inherent contingency of the universe" (Lang 1997, 60-61). James Martin Lang, who bases his view of existentialism on William Barret's summary of the movement in *Irrational Man* (1958), in my view correctly claims that Stonehenge stands for these existentialist ideas in the novel (ibid.).

[554] *ES*, 111.

and Ann Lee meant that there was emotional Enlightenment as well as the intellectual and middle-class Enlightenment of eighteenth-century England.[555]

Most interestingly, there seems to be a clear connection between this idea of contrasting emotional and intellectual Enlightenment and the question of Celtic heritage. This is shown in Fowles's ambiguous attitude towards Celtic culture. On the one hand, there are passages both in his novels and essays that reveal Fowles's admiration of the Celtic heritage. For instance, the idea of *Celtic twilight*, the Romantic notion that Celtic people have always possessed a more spiritual, imaginative and poetic view of life than the practical and materialistic peoples, like the Anglo-Saxons,[556] is expressed in a single sentence in the first chapter of *Daniel Martin*, which describes how a German fighter flies over the harvesting people in Southern England on 22.8.1942:

> As if something about that great sear of machinery, the quickness and inhumanity of it, the power, has impressed him; sweating away with rotten old horses, saved from the Army by the farm…old Celtic softness for metal Romans.[557]

The passage refers to the Celtic "softness" and draws a parallel between the German raid on England during World War II and the Roman invasion, hence referring to the other two nations beside the Anglo-Saxons who have with varying success tried to invade the British Isles.

Moreover, Fowles regards the Celts as among the finest storytellers and myth-makers of all human history.[558] It is no surprise, then, that Fowles is enthused over the medieval quest-stories that utilise Celtic legends and mythical stories as their subtexts. This interest is shown clearly in his short story collection *The*

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[555] *M*, 457.

[556] Wynne-Davies 1994, *The Celtic Twilight*. The word takes its name from W. B. Yeats's collection of poetry from 1893.

[557] *DM*, 12.

[558] *ES*, 107.

Ebony Tower, whose title-story is a postmodernist parodic adaptation both of Marie de France's medieval lay *Eliduc* and Chrétien de Troy's romance *Yvain* with many other references to the Celtic world. *A Maggot* in fact goes further in this interest in Celtic myths as it uses Celtic mythological elements (such as the tripartite mother-goddess) without the medieval stories as mediators of the heritage. It is noteworthy, though, that *A Maggot*, like 'The Ebony Tower,' confronts reason with emotion, or, as the narrator of the short story puts it, "the fact of being" with "the passion to exist," with some kind of an existentialist undertone.[559]

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that Fowles's attitude towards ancient Celtic culture is ambivalent and not exclusively romantic, or idealising. His discussion on the use of the Stonehenge-motif in Blake's prophetic poetry is revealing in this respect. He says that Blake regarded the Druids as the first to create an intellectual system and, as a consequence, imprisoned people's souls.[560] Fowles's critical attitude towards all-encompassing intellectual systems or religious laws appears again when he develops Blake's thoughts further and claims that science is the Druidism of our day:

> That science is the dominant system in terms of what now goes on at the site, as it is over so much of the rest of our lives, is inevitable; and only a fool would argue that this should not be so in term of conservation and excavation. But the danger comes when it attempts to dictate our personal experience and perception of the whole,[561] for this is the essence of what Blake feared in druidism: not just knowing for oneself, but knowing for everybody else as well.
>
> More and more Western society threatens to forget that other systems of perceiving, understanding and deriving benefit from external reality exist.[562]

[559] *ET*, 102; cf. Brax 1993, 138.

[560] *ES*, 123.

[561] For a discussion on the concept "whole," see above Ch. 3.6.1.

[562] *ES*, 124.

Thus, Mr Ayscough, the representative of pure reason, static social order, and the established church, could be seen to act like a druid because he tries to capture the soul of Rebecca and others. In other words, Mr Ayscough is an eighteenth-century counterpart of a druid in this negative and unethical sense. His rationalism aims at the kind of universal "knowing for everybody" that Blake opposed and that also runs counter to postmodern ethical sensitivity. So according to Fowles, the attempt of modern science to "dictate […] personal experience" is an attempt to compose a totalitarian narrative that does not allow any variance in perceiving reality and that is hostile to any form of otherness or change in the order of things.[563] Mr Ayscough represents this modern scientific druidism of Western society in *A Maggot*.

6.4 Science Fiction and History

> Above all, perhaps, he [H. G. Wells] was a believer in the power of science to change the world, but–crucially for his development as a writer of 'scientific romances'–saw science not as the creator of certainties and unveiler of mysteries, but as the great purveyor of mystery and wonder, just as religion had been in its time.[564]

As we have already seen, *A Maggot* can also be read as sf.[565] This alternative reading is again rendered possible by the ambiguous structure of the novel. In narratological terms, this way of reading is realised when Rebecca is considered an unreliable narrator and her testimony is not read literally. In other words, when

[563] Ibid.

[564] James 1994, 28.

[565] See above Ch. 3.2.2.

Rebecca's testimony is not taken as a true story of godly appearance, it can be interpreted also, besides the other connotative readings considered in the previous chapter, as a depiction of a visit of a time-machine or an alien spaceship to the south-west of England in 1736. There are several hints in this direction in the novel, and they become more apparent when the testimonies and Mr Ayscough's correspondence are read carefully.[566] Thus it seems clear that *A Maggot* is also built on the conventions of sf, even though this generic aspect of the novel has been overlooked in several of the previous studies of the novel.

Nevertheless, there is a mention of the novel in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. In the book the novel is clearly seen to represent science fiction, and the description of the structure of the novel coincides with the definition:

> Of JF's other novels, *A Maggot* (1985) is sf. Set in the eighteenth century, it superlatively explores the epistemology of First Contact—the study of possible nature of human PERCEPTIONS of something genuinely ALIEN, genuinely Other—by telling a version of the life-story of the mother of Ann Lee (1736-1784), historical founder of the Shaker religion; the woman's response to the insoluble knot of PERCEPTIONS visited upon her when she inadvertently stumbles upon some time travellers, possibly from the Earth's future, is a literal seedbed (she is pregnant at the time) for Enthusiasm.[567]

Unfortunately, there is one minor but crucial error in the passage, namely the assumption that the enigmatic characters Rebecca meet in the novel are most certainly time travellers. As we have seen, they might be of many other origins as well, for example godly or satanic creatures. Consequently, the *Encyclopedia* makes itself guilty of generic reduction. If we would accept the idea suggested in the passage, it would prevent us from considering the novel as fantastic literature,

[566] See above Ch. 3.2.2.

[567] Clute–Nicholls 1993, 443.

since the epistemological hesitation of the world of the novel would certainly cease.

The problem with this kind of generic reductionism becomes clearly visible, if we confront two contradicting and simplifying estimations of the intrinsic nature of the "maggot." According to the *Encyclopedia*, the maggot is a time machine while Katherine Tarbox regards it as an alien spaceship. Tarbox is, though, more accurate in her interpretation as she admits that it is precisely the modern reader who makes the interpretation of a maggot as a spaceship.[568] Thus she takes into consideration the fact that the reader might interpret events differently than the characters at the diegetic level. However, her reading neglects the possibility of interpreting the world of the novel differently also in the generic context of sf. The visitors might just as well come from the future as from another planet. Moreover, they might even have the ability to travel both in time and space; nothing in the novel contradicts this particular interpretation. Visitors from another planet might try to show for Rebecca what is expected in the future of her own planet and thus try to contribute to earth's history and fate.[569] Thus it seems obvious that the novel is open to several plausible interpretations even when read within the generic framework of sf.[570]

It is vital for the description of the poetic structure of the novel that the impression of the maggot as a time-machine or a spaceship arises only in the reader's mind (at the extradiegetic level of the narrative), and not in the minds of the characters (the diegetic level). In other words, the characters of the novel are not able to understand that the maggot might be a time-machine or a spaceship.

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[568] Tarbox 1988, 152.

[569] It is also possible that the alien visitors are not showing Rebecca the future of the earth but the crude past of their own planet (that resembles earth in many ways) as well as the happy present of the highly-developed civilisation of their own.

[570] Cf. Bo Pettersson's analysis of Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) and its relationship to Dostoyevsky's short story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" (1877) (Pettersson 1994, 274-280). Also these two texts mix sf conventions and elements of fantasy, and could perhaps be categorised as pure fantastic narratives.

There might be an exception to this rule, since Mr Bartholomew seems to have at least some knowledge of the aliens even before his secret meeting with them. But since Mr Bartholomew keeps his knowledge to himself, all the witnesses, even Rebecca, interpret the strange events according to the thoughts and suspicions of their own time. Hence the ideological, scientific and psychological vantage points of the characters remain characteristic of individuals living in 1736. The reader's gaze is, however, biased by the knowledge of the conventions of sf and technological innovations.

Hypothetically, one could conduct an experiment: give the novel to some people living in 1736, and see if they would all fail to recognise the sf conventions included. The characters of the novel can be considered equal to this kind of insufficiently equipped historical readers since they do not have the ability to explain their world according to modern generic conventions and cultural knowledge. Nevertheless, this narrative strategy does not result in making fools of the characters: it would be irrational to blame a person living in eighteenth-century England of not having read sf, just as it would be to blame an Ancient Greek for not having the knowledge to understand *Finnegans Wake*.[571] Instead, the strategy emphasises the realist disposition of the story as it leaves the portrayed historical world unaffected by modern innovations and as it does not lend the characters an anachronistic gaze.

As regards the present analysis, it is important to note that sf and historical fiction in certain respects resemble each other as genres. Edward James has remarked that of all literary non-sf genres it is just historical fiction that presents the same kind of problems for the readers and authors as sf. Historical fictions and sf both deal with worlds that are not experienced directly by the readers and authors. The worlds of historical fiction are partly reconstructed from existing historical facts but also through imagination and scientific theories. As a rule, historical fictions set in the remote past require more imaginative effort from the author than those set in the more recent past. Consequently, James asserts that the

[571] Cf. Eco 1981, 10.

novels of prehistory bear the closest resemblance to sf, since they entail so much scientific, archaeological and anthropological speculation.[572]

James argues that much of sf is itself historical fiction, that is, historical fiction of the future. He also wants to show that this equation works the other way round: much of historical fiction is in fact sf, because both (and especially fiction about prehistoric times) are concerned with things unknown to us.[573] For the present purposes, it is particularly interesting that Fowles refers to the resemblance between the historical novel and sf in his 'Notes to an Unfinished Novel.' He writes that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* resembles sf because "[a] journey is a journey, backwards or forwards."[574] The point is that while constructing an intimate scene and representation of the intimate speech of Victorian lovers, Fowles had to use the convention of historical speculation and probability. From the point of view of genre history, it is intriguing that a historical fiction that portrays the Victorian Age resembles sf just because Victorian literature does not offer examples of the intimate speech of lovers. The Victorian Age is quite familiar to us because of the vast documentary material, and therefore, modern novels that depict the period do not resemble sf in general. Intimate speech and erotic bedchamber scenes are, however, areas of Victorian culture which are unknown to us and which neo-Victorian fiction can approach only speculatively, i.e. by the means of sf.

A Maggot's relationship to history is more difficult to clarify as the text resists a reductive classification both as sf and classical historical fiction. There is still one special category that combines history and sf, namely that of an alternative history. Nevertheless, *A Maggot* does not belong to this category either. By definition, texts belonging to the genre offer a logical alternative to the known history, whereas *A Maggot* does not.[575] Rather, it designs some imaginative reasons for the birth of a historical founder of a religious sect, fills the dark areas

[572] James 1994, 112-113.

[573] Ibid.

[574] *NUN*, 17.

[575] Cf. James 1994, 113.

of history with fictional inventions, and yet still does not change the course of history radically as alternative histories do.

While analysing *A Maggot* and its relationship both to history and sf it is worth taking into consideration also the idea of *novum* as a characteristic feature of sf. A novum is a thing that causes estrangement in the reader. In sf, the reader tries to make sense of this estranging thing through cognition. Sf presents novums in principle, and classical historical fictions do not. It is just the fact that historical fiction is thought to present something real and not create novums that distinguishes it from sf.[576] But *A Maggot* is not a classical work of historical fiction, as it does not respect the realist constraints on the genre.[577] There is an anomaly in the novel's representation of the historical world just because the world of sf is always different from the reader's world. In other words, *A Maggot* resembles sf, since it contains a novum.

In *A Maggot* the visit of the strangers engenders estrangement and thus claims a rational evaluation from the reader. In other words, the novel asks: what if visitors from outer space or from the future had landed on earth almost three hundred years ago and met some people in southwestern England? It also asks: what if some aliens had shown the future of our planet (whether possible or real) to a plain English girl? From this generic point of view the novel studies the affect of this kind of experiment. However, the reader can not use his general knowledge in order to establish what is really happening in the novel's world. The difference between *A Maggot* and classical sf is, thus, that the reader can never be sure whether the question is really of a visit of a time-machine or a spaceship. The novel preserves its mystery.

However, the novel functions like sf, as it satirically comments on the world of 1980s Britain through metaphor and extrapolation, and as the caused cognitive estrangement is a vehicle to make our own world, its history and cultural history, laws and customs, seem strange and indeterminate in the reader's mind. The

[576] See Suvin 1979, 63-84.

[577] For a discussion on the realist constraints on historical fiction, see above Ch. 3.1.2.

novel, a variation on the time-machine or alien's motif of sf, not only questions the principles of historiography but also make us reorganise our thoughts concerning the processes of history, the values of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, technical evolution, and the ideas of the self and freedom. In conclusion, from one particular generic point of view the novel is sf, or perhaps better still, a scientific romance, which examines the outcomes of Western rationalism and science and invokes a sense of mystery.

6.5 Why the Return of the Fantastic? Comparing A Maggot*,* Chatterton *and* Nights at the Circus

The appearance of the pure fantastic in contemporary literature has not gone unnoticed. Julia Cruz analyses the occurrence of Todorov's pure fantastic in Julio Cortazar's 'The Island at Noon' ('La isla a mediodia,' 1966), Brian McHale argues that Thomas Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 49* (1966) belongs to this genre, and Rimmon-Kenan asserts that Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) oscillates between natural and supernatural explanations in an insoluble ambiguity.[578] Moreover, Eberhard Alsen maintains that Todorov made an erroneous prediction about the future of the fantastic.[579] Unfortunately, Alsen does not give any examples of the new pure fantastic.[580] Nevertheless, it remains to be examined how frequent the utilisation of this generic form really is in contemporary literature. My purpose here is merely to show that it occurs repeatedly at least in the British postmodernist historical novel.

[578] See Cruz 1986, McHale 1989, 47 and Rimmon-Kenan 1996, 199 and passim.

[579] Alsen 1996, 133.

[580] Alsen analyes Donald Barthelme's *The Dead Father* (1975) as a neo-modernist story where the fantastic is finally explained, and Philip Roth's *The Breast* (1972) as a Romantic postmodern story where the supernatural resolves itself into the marvellous (1996, 133-152). He does not explain where the pure fantastic would belong according to the distinction he makes between neo-modernism and Romantic postmodernism.

The following short textual analyses are included in this study also because they help to explain why the use of the fantastic has become so important and to what thematic ends it is applied in the contemporary British historical novel. Thus, the analyses also help to locate *A Maggot* in the context of contemporary literature. Because famous writers recurrently use this form of ambiguous narration, the analysis of the manner in which it occurs in their fiction is informative of the poetics of postmodernist literature and of the cultural condition of Western societies. The analysis also seems to suggest that Todorov was mistaken in asserting that it has become impossible to write novels that belong to the pure fantastic in the second half of the twentieth century.[581] The texts discussed are Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987). Like *A Maggot*, they all represent the British postmodernist historical novel of the 1980s, and as I am suggesting, the fantastic.

6.5.1 The Fantastic as Feminist Literary Genre: Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*

It has been argued that Angela Carter's novels resemble in literary style *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez: her prose from *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) onwards has been labelled as *magic realism*.[582] In magic realism supernatural characters and phenomena inhabit the everyday and as such magic realism has been seen to be manifest in those of Carter's prose fiction works that include not only a lot of realistic and historical details but also grotesque supernatural characters. Moreover, they have been read as political analyses of power in the manner of the novels of Márquez and Alejo Carpentier.[583] Nevertheless, a closer look at the narration of Carter's fiction reveal a more sophisticated and varied use of the fantasy elements than the classification

[581] Todorov 1975, 160-161.

[582] Sage 1994, 1-2.

[583] Gamble 1997, 111.

of them simply as magic realism would suggest. Accordingly, my intention is to show that at least one of the novels has a narrative structure that cannot be reduced to a simple classification.

I am here interested in Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and its narration. It is a novel about a celebrated trapeze artist Fevvers, a woman with wings, and her encounter with a US journalist, Walser. It is a historical novel, but not a traditional one. *Nights at the Circus* is also a fantastic narrative, and it uses narrative ambiguity at the service of a feminist thematics.

Nights at the Circus is an ambiguous narrative, because the reader cannot decide whether Fevvers is or is not an unreliable narrator. Fevvers tells Walser the story of her life, but Walser and the reader are not able to determine whether she is a fake or an unnatural being. In other words, the novel does not definitely answer whether Fevver's wings are real or feigned. Walser, the circus audience and the reader will all be kept in ignorance of the real state of affairs throughout the story. Fevvers keeps her secret.

Carter's story meets the requirements made of a pure fantastic story. There is a character in the story, Walser, who hesitates between natural and supernatural explanation of the seemingly supernatural characters and happenings. This hesitation, which the reader also shares (Walser is in this sense the representative of the reader in the story), does not disappear during the course of the story.

Nevertheless, there are some aspects that make Carter's narrative different from the nineteenth-century fantastic. Firstly, the seemingly supernatural element is present already at the beginning of the story. According to Todorov, in the pure fantastic strange phenomena occur only after a realistic setting and atmosphere has been created. However, this aspect of Carter's novel does not really threaten its classification as pure fantastic. As a journalist, Walser represents the realistic world and its belief in rationality, and Fevvers is a representative of the world of the circus with its aspiration for creating myths, heroes and unbelievable stories. So, the arrangement in the beginning brings out possibilities for both natural and supernatural explanation.

Secondly, the question of the ontological condition of the world represented is somewhat set aside in the course of the story, even though not completely. It should be noted, that it is important for the classification of the novel whether the story generates doubtfulness or not. In magic realism the supernatural does not produce hesitation in the reader or in the characters of the novel. Brian McHale speaks of the "banalization" of the fantastic that occurs in magic realism and in some of the modernist and postmodernist novels: the supernatural is part of the everyday in them.[584] It could be said that in Carter's novel this banalisation is not of the same degree as in magic realism. The plot of the novel does not emphasise the solving of the ontological problem of the represented world even though the question is present from the beginning to the end of the story.

It must be emphasised, however, that the second chapter of the novel comes fairly close to the style of magic realism. The chimpanzees, appearing in the chapter, are too clever to be realistic: they learn to speak and write. Their leader, called Professor, even makes a contract of employment with the leader of the circus. It is noteworthy that no one actually marvels at this in the novel. One passage, however, gives a hint towards a natural solution of the matter: "'Aw, shoot, professor! If there ain't a man in the ring with you, people'll think you're just a bunch of high-school kids in monkey suits!'"[585] Even if this passage refers to the existence of a hesitant audience and even if it makes the reader ponder on the intelligence of the chimpanzees at least in passing, it seems nevertheless clear that the chapter trivialises the fantastic almost altogether in the manner of magic realism.

Yet not even the interpretation of the chimpanzees as clearly unrealistic characters would solve the question of the ontology of the world portrayed. It would be quite hard to see in the exceptional intelligence of the chimpanzees an answer to the question of whether Fevver's wings are real. In other words, the second chapter would not make Carter's novel marvellous literature, because the

[584] McHale 1989, 77-78.

[585] *NC*, 169.

hesitation of the implicit reader does not completely cease even if the detail in question were to tilt the balance in favour of a supernatural interpretation. The reader would still hesitate as far as Fevver's character is concerned.

As regards the theory of postmodernist literature, perhaps the most important point is that Carter's novel mixes eclectically different genres of fantasy, pure fantastic and magic realism. This stylistic playfulness, emphasised even more by the peculiar play with the narrative positions, obscures even more the reader's understanding of the ontology of the portrayed world. If we accept McHale's conception that ontological problemas characterise postmodernist fiction, *Nights at the Circus* is an example of postmodernist historical fiction *par excellence*.[586] It is also interesting to note that the postmodernist novel differs from the nineteenth-century fantastic because it can contain qualitatively different fantasy without completely banalising (in McHale's terms) the fantastic effect. So, the present analysis of Carter's novel seems to show that Todorov did not take into account all the possible forms of manifestations of the fantastic effect.

Nights at the Circus uses the pure fantastic structure in order to thematise the question of authenticity. It never becomes clear whether Fevvers is a fiction or a fact. Moreover, the question of authenticity expands to concern issues of sexuality and culturally prescribed gender roles. The novel studies cultural mythologies of gender, and the narrative ambiguity suits this intention very well: it enables Fevvers to tell her fantastic and symbolic stories of women's lives as if true, and at the same time to control Walser's thoughts. Her imagination and expertise in telling stories liberate and empower her.

The impossibility of categorising Fevvers is thus partly the result of the novel's fantastic structure, which makes it impossible to draw any final conclusions about the ontology of the narrated world and its enigmatic characters. The structure creates confusion and estrangement, which provides a means for studying traditional gender roles. Isobel Armstrong notes that the novel utilises fantasy in

[586] McHale 1989, 10.

order to reveal the nature of fantasies. With the exception of Fevvers, all the women in the novel are compelled to perform according to other people's conceptions of women's roles in life. This matter is revealed by its opposite, Fevvers's liberation by her imagination and narrative talent.[587] The novel can thus be said to cleverly exploit Todorov's pure fantastic and supernatural motifs as feminist literary devices.

6.5.2 The Return of the Dead (*Apophrades*): Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* and the Anxiety of (Supernatural?) Influence

> The mighty dead return, but they return in our colors, and speaking in our voices, at least in part, at least in moments, moments that testify to our persistence, and not to their own.[588]

> […] it seemed even then that the Dead were speaking to me, face to face; and when I wrote out their words, coppying the very spelling of the Originals, it was as if I had become one of those Dead and could speak with them also.[589]

Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* thematises the question of originality in art and literature. The novel studies the Romantic idea of literature as self-expression and as a product of its author's divine inspiration, and it shows ironically the problems Romantic thinking meets in the postmodern age and culture. Its main character, Charles Wychwood, attempts unconsciously to be a Romantic poet in wrong age. He is not aware of the weight modern literary theory has ascribed to tradition at

[587] Armstrong 1994, 271-272.

[588] Bloom 1997, 141.

[589] *Ch*, 85.

least since T. S. Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1917). As Ackroyd's novel ironically shows, the belief in an artist as an original genius is a persisting myth, even though Foucault argued as early as in the 1970s that history knows only one age that believed in originality without reserve, the Romantic period.[590]

As a postmodernist historical novel *Chatterton* aims to show the relativity of historiography. The relationship between fiction and historical representation is one of the major themes in many postmodernist historical novels. They thematise the epistemological question as *how* we know history. In other words, they shake our confidence in historical knowledge. Linda Hutcheon has said that the ethos of postmodernist historiographic metafiction is the acceptance of radical uncertainty,[591] and this holds good for *Chatterton* too.

The major question *Chatterton* asks is, can a fictional representation establish the truth of the historical Thomas Chatterton's death any better than the Romantic necrology and official truth? Was the death of Thomas Chatterton a suicide, or did he just take too much arsenic by mistake while trying to cure his gonorrhoea? The imaginary (and parodic) explanation the novel gives for the death of Chatterton seems more acceptable than the Romantic, because the reader of the novel has a modern kind of understanding of the psyche of a young man. In other words, Ackroyd's fictional narrative touches more appropriately the sensibility of the end of the twentieth century than the description based on historical documents. Even the novel's naturalist depiction of Chatterton's death has a more realistic effect on the modern reader than the too clean and beautiful Romantic vision of it portrayed for instance in Henry Wallis's painting from 1856.

My main argument here is that Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* can be classified as a pure fantastic narrative. There are only a couple of short episodes in the novel that suggest that there might be some sort of supernatural force at work in the world of the novel. (In any case, it is impossible to overlook them in a careful

[590] Foucault 1977, 151.

[591] Hutcheon 1989, 93-117, see above 2.2.1.

reading.) The passage where Charles Wychwood faints in a restaurant called Kubla Khan clearly hints at the supernatural:

> His [Charles's] attention was distracted by someone standing behind her; he made an effort to rise from his chair, as he muttered, 'Yes, of course. I know you very well.' But then he collapsed, falling sideways from his chair onto the carpet of the Kubla Khan.[592]

Whom does Charles see? The novel does not give an explicit answer to this question. However, the reader is led to assume that Charles is speaking to Thomas Chatterton's ghost. In an earlier scene Charles has seen Chatterton lying on his sofa, but on that occasion the ghost proved to be just a painting of Chatterton. However, this former *anagnorisis*, even if a wrong one, prepares us for the appearance of the real ghost later on in the novel. The assumption that the anonymous young man that suddenly shows up in Kubla Khan is really Thomas Chatterton gains significance from the way the author Harriet Scrope reacts to the sight:

> When Charles had murmured 'I know you very well' in the Kubla Khan restaurant, Harriet Scrope looked up for a moment and saw the outline of a young man who smiled and bowed towards him. She was so astonished by this that, in the confusion which followed Charles's collapse, she snatched the bottle from the waiter's hands and helped herself to two more large gins. […] Harriet was still staring at that spot where she thought she had seen the image of a young man and it was only when Charles was placed upon a stretcher, and carried out to the waiting ambulance, that the reality of the situation began to affect her.[593]

These passages show that the novel in Harriet Scrope has a rational character who hesitates in front of a strange, or at least apparently supernatural phenomenon. In other words, the novel complies with one of the major conditions Todorov has

[592] *Ch*, 152.

[593] *Ch*, 166-167.

established for the fantastic. In the first quoted passage it is said that Harriet Scrope *saw* a young man, and in the other that she *thought she saw* a young man. This primary reaction, a rapid change in attitude toward a strange event is common in ghost stories, where conventionally a rational character does not at first believe their eyes but is compelled later to accept the presence of the unreal.

The showing up of Thomas Chatterton's ghost is not corroborated in the novel. The passage could be interpreted as representing an illusion that both Charles Wychwood and Harriet Scrope experience. Charles has a brain tumour, and Harriet, even if rational and disillusioned, is a nervous and stressed author. Therefore, they could see just what they fear or hope for. Moreover, the narrator does not even declare that Charles or Harriet identifies the young person expressly as Thomas Chatterton.

Consequently, *Chatterton* is a fantastic novel. Its narrator does not give enough information for the reader to decide whether the quick and questionable showing up of a ghost can be explained away according to some natural law or if it is to be accepted as a truly supernatural phenomenon. This kind of ambiguous narration gives birth to an unending and insoluble fantastic effect.

As I pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, *Chatterton* is a text that illustrates the postmodern problematic attitude towards tradition, a phenomenon that Harold Bloom calls the anxiety of influence.[594] There are two antithetical characters in the novel in this respect. Charles Wychwood is a novice-like poet who still believes in originality in art and in the significance of literature. The following passages depict Charles's engagement with the Romantic conception of genius and originality:

> [I]t was just a matter of time before he [Charles] was recognised, and he did not believe himself to be in any particular hurry. He was so certain of his own gifts that he had no intention of yielding to the conventional anxieties about recognition; not yet.[595]

[594] Bloom 1997, passim.

[595] *Ch*, 14-15.

> 'There's plenty of time. I'm in no hurry.' Then he [Charles] added in a deep, mock-solemn voice, 'My genius will one day be recognised.' Harriet said nothing […].[596]

Harriet Scrope stands in sharp contrast to him. She is almost a plagiarist, and she has no illusions whatever about the work of an author. She symbolises a nihilistic postmodern attitude towards poetry. These two extreme attitudes seem equally problematic. All in all, the novel shows that contemporary authors have lost their innocent view of the past. Still, they have not yet found a morally and artistically acceptable and convincing attitude towards tradition. *Chatterton* illustrates this anxiety of influence in its comic depiction of the modern author.

Nevertheless, a different kind of view on the literary tradition comes to the fore when *Chatterton* is conceived of as a pure fantastic narrative. The novel suggests that contemporary authors could be haunted not only by ancient texts but also by dead authors' ghosts. Old texts gleam through the new ones like palimpsests, and contemporary poets might analogously repeat the acts of the mighty dead ones as if bewitched. There is an example of analogous repetition of the dead author's fate in *Chatterton*, too: the death scene of Charles Wychwood. The death of Charles is focalized through his eyes and sentiments, and this focalization shows clearly that he experiences again the death of Thomas Chatterton.

However, there is a great irony in Charles Wychwood's death, since Charles does not experience the real, historical death of Thomas Chatterton but the fictional one portrayed in Henry Wallis's painting. Therefore, the death scene symbolises comically Charles Wychwood's inborn naiveté and unsophisticated relationship to art: he imagines himself to dying like a famous poet, but fails to notice that the model for his death is artificial.

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[596] *Ch*, 39. Ansgar Nünning detects several other leitmotifs of artistic misunderstanding and decline in the novel besides this motif of 'my genius will someday be discovered,' such as 'poetry and poverty,' 'despair and madness,' 'everlasting fame,' 'new and happy combinations' and 'seeing is believing' (1994, 36).

Moreover, Chatterton's death is a comic illustration of the idea Henry Wallis speaks of earlier in the novel: life imitates art and not vice versa. Henry Wallis's notion is clearly Romantic, and a similar opinion is expressed openly for instance in the prologue of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), but it is also a postmodern one. For instance, the philosopher and nominalist Nelson Goodman has argued accordingly that art and literature as well as different sciences create multiple variants of reality, incomparable *world versions*.[597] According to Ackroyd's novel, not only the life but also the death of a person imitates art.

Even though the death scene of Charles Wychwood is most reasonably interpreted as representing a curious and imaginative identification of a suffering person with an art figure, in the light of the previous episode that takes place in Kubla Khan it is possible to assume alternatively that some supernatural force plays tricks on him. Whatever the truth, if the vision that unfolds for Charles at the moment of his death is not a product of his diseased brain but the workings of the unreal, it must be accepted that the ghost of Thomas Chatterton is well versed in black humour.

6.5.3 Conclusion: The Fantastic as a Rhetorical and Thematic Strategy

Why then has the use of the supernatural and the fantastic become popular in the fiction of recent decades? One explanation would be to say that it is only an answer to the mechanisation of the realist generic conventions of the classical historical novel. However, this formalist argument can only be one part of an explanation, even if it clearly contains some of the truth.

As indicated earlier, Todorov himself still believed in 1970 that the use of the supernatural in literature will become rare in the second half of the twentieth century, but literary history has not respected his prediction. He thought that psychoanalysis, and the literature which is directly or indirectly inspired by it, has

[597] Goodman 1978, passim.

replaced the literature of the fantastic and marvellous, since "there is no need today to resort to the devil in order to speak of an excessive sexual desire."[598] This is of course an argument that is based on a materialist notion of the world. By contrast, Eberhard Alsen claims that at least many contemporary postmodern American authors use the supernatural in their fiction to suggest in a Romantic manner that in reality the physical world and the spiritual world interpenetrate.[599] It is, however, methodologically dubious to judge only from fiction whether or not an author really suggests the real existence of the supernatural. So Alsen's argument about the supernatural and postmodernism might not be suitable for the analysis of the British contemporary historical novel in every respect.

What seems more likely is that the supernatural can be used for many different thematic purposes in postmodernist literature. As my examination of the three novels shows, the basic *intentio operis* of many British postmodernist historical novels is not to claim the supernatural as real but to use it as a rhetorical device for some specific thematic end: to study and present feminist, artistic, Romanticist, or some other principles. For instance, in Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) the supernatural phenomena are brought forth in order to present the spiritual beliefs of Indian people and to dismantle a Western impression of India and its cultural history.

Yet at least in Fowles's novel the ambiguous structure is used precisely to support the Romantic philosophy of life over pure reason. The question of Romantic principles also appears in *Chatterton*, even if the novel does not make a choice between different values as straightforwardly as Fowles's *A Maggot*. The thematic function of the pure fantastic structure of *A Maggot* is to create a feeling of mystery in service of Romanticist thought. The fundamentally enigmatic nature of reality is a positive value in many of Fowles's stories, because it reveals the artificiality of intellectual systems. Mystery is a mark of Romantic aspiration: Fowles's novel confronts the birth of Romanticism with the values of

[598] Todorov 1975, 160-161.

[599] Alsen 1996, 137.

Enlightenment in its juxtaposition of main characters. Mr Ayscough represents the belief in the values of Enlightenment and the rationalism of the eighteenth century, and Rebecca Lee symbolises the rise of Romanticism with her creative imagination, spirit of opposition and fondness of flowers. There is a great irony in the fact that Mr Ayscough is not able to solve the case he has been engaged to solve, and this failure shows the limits of rational thinking. On the contrary, Rebecca Lee has survived Mr Ayscough's attempt to control her, to understand her secret, and to show her place in stagnant and determining society. Rebecca Lee's victory over Mr Ayscough is a Romantic triumph of emotion and imagination over "the machine," pure reason. As the fantastic structure generates a sense of mysteriousness in the novel, it emphasises this theme of Romantic imagination and femininity.

Furthermore, the anomalous use of the supernatural motives in a historical novel is a Romantic act as such, because it emphasises the imaginative aspect of literature at the expense of realism. In this sense, Eberhard Alsen's idea of the recurrence of Romanticism in the second phase of postmodernism seems to correspond to some of the contemporary trends in British literature too.

Another view that seems to suit at least the analysis of *A Maggot* is that the ambiguous narrative structure is often thematised to mark the limits of human knowledge.[600] Indeed, the unsolved mystery of Mr Bartholomew's disappearance could be seen to symbolise the limits of historical knowledge in general. Nevertheless, I believe that the novel's thematic agenda rests on the importance of an intuitive and sensitive understanding and imagination that render the transcending of pure reason possible.

However, it should still be emphasised that all the novels analysed in this chapter are influenced by Western rational thinking and do not, therefore, express the spiritual at its purest. I believe that the very difference between the "magic realism" of Latin America, at least as it finds its expression in Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and Western fantastic novels is that the latter do not

[600] Rimmon-Kenan 1995, 16-17.

stick to the idea of spirituality in the sense that the former do.[601] It is just characteristic of the pure fantastic that it bears the imprint of Western rationalism, even though it strives after other sensitivities and ways of experiencing the world.

[601] Melvin Rahming has argued that there is no magic in magic realism but rather that the question is one of the representation of spirituality (Rahming 2001). Thus the generic label seems somewhat misleading.

CHAPTER 7: *A MAGGOT* AS METAPHYSICAL DETECTIVE FICTION

There seems to be general consensus among scholars that *A Maggot* follows the structure of a detective story. Frederick M. Holmes writes that *A Maggot* is "a kind of detective story," and Bo H. T. Eriksson calls *A Maggot* a "postmodern detective story" and analyses profoundly the "structuring forces" of detection of the novel and the way it combines the thriller and the formal, that is, classical detective story.[602] Unquestionably, *A Maggot* is in many ways structured like a detective story, and some of the characters, especially the attorney Ayscough, are straight from the genre's gallery it would seem.[603]

I shall analyse the detective story elements of *A Maggot* from an angle chosen to match the critical method of this study. In the examination of textual similarities and differences between Fowles's novel and the detective story I shall concentrate especially on asking why *A Maggot* breaks with the conventions of the classical detective story. That is, I will ponder on the thematic and ethical

[602] Holmes 1991, 231-232 and Eriksson 1995, 197.

[603] See above 3.2.2.

reasons for the manipulation of generic features. The discussion will be related to concern the genealogy of the detective story as a popular genre.

My approach is neither consciously sympathetic nor unsympathetic towards the detective fiction genre. I accept John M. Reilly's view that the narrative power is the ultimate strength of the genre,[604] and the application of detective story elements is certainly one of the factors that makes a reading of *A Maggot* so seductive. Nevertheless, as the deviations from the classical detective story formula are thematised in the novel, they must be studied carefully. This is an area of interest that has been given too little attention in the previous research.[605]

There are at least three kinds of deviations from the classical detective story pattern in *A Maggot*. First (1), the detective story is situated anachronistically in the year 1736 when there were no detectives as such. Second (2), the novel is critical towards the empiricist and rationalist ideology that the classical detective story espouses. Third (3), the detective pattern is only a part of the novel's hybrid generic form. I have already dealt with the first of these deviations in Chapter 3.2 above, so this chapter is given to studying the second. The third one, the postmodernist hybridisation of generic conventions, is one of the main themes of my analysis of *A Maggot*, and is referred to repeatedly in this chapter.

Because these deviations seem characteristic of the novel which comments on tradition thereby, it can be defined as metaphysical detective fiction. The novel meets the conditions of this subgenre, defined recently by Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabet Sweeney as follows:

> A metaphysical detective story is a text that parodies or subverts traditional detective-story conventions–such as narrative closure and the detective's role as surrogate reader–with the intention, or at least the effect, of asking questions about mysteries of being and knowing which transcend the mere machinations of the mystery plot. Metaphysical detective stories often

[604] Reilly 1980, xi.

[605] Bo H. T. Eriksson analyses the parallels between the novel and the detective story, but he almost entirely neglects this view.

> emphasize this transcendence, moreover, by becoming self-reflexive (that is, by representing allegorically the text's own process of composition).[606]

Moreover, there are similarities between the uses of the detective story formula in *A Maggot* and some other postmodernist fictions like Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. I shall approach Fowles's novel in the light of the theoretical views about the interrelationship between detective fiction and the poetics of postmodernism put forward by Brian McHale, Michael Holquist, and William Spanos.

I shall also argue that *A Maggot* has its roots in a minor tradition within the classical detective narratives. Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) is considered to be the initiator in this tradition. The Collinsian detective stories are constructed on certain characteristic narrative conventions that separate them from the other trend of classical detective stories, the more popular one following the pattern of Poe's and Conan Doyle's fictions. As will be shown, *A Maggot* develops the narrative form of this subgenre and takes some latent philosophical suggestions of *The Moonstone* to the extreme.

It was previously noted that *A Maggot* is like a fictional study of the rise of the detective story.[607] Even if the discussion need not be reiterated here, it is vital to add that Fowles's novel imitates criminal biographies and accounts of trials that were popular genres in the historical epoch in which the events of the novel are situated. The novel, in other words, makes use of stylistic imitation of the eighteenth-century accounts of crime that eventually led to the birth of detective stories. Moreover, the novel has Daniel Defoe's satirical *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* (1702) as its subtext. Here the novel again shows, ultimately, that history is present for us not only through historiography but also through fiction and other literature. The reference and allusions to the works of Defoe serve to foreground the social conditions and reasons for the high crime rate of the times.

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[606] Merivale and Sweeney 1999, 2.

[607] See above Ch. 3.2.2.

7.1 Metaphysical Detection and the Poetics of Postmodernism

Let us first compare and evaluate some views about the relationship between detective stories and postmodernist poetics, namely those of Michael Holquist, Brian McHale and William Spanos. The particular reason for this comparison is that I want to point out the difficulties in reductively claiming that a genre is typical of a certain literary historical period only. In addition, this subchapter prepares the following analysis of *A Maggot* by providing a general view of the ideology of postmodernist detective stories.

According to McHale's definition, detective fiction is an epistemological genre *par excellence*. Consequently, in detective fiction the intent of modernism is at its purest, since modernism essentially deals with epistemological questions and postmodernism with ontological questions.[608] This notion is, unfortunately, problematic for at least three different reasons. First, it does not take into account that the dominant *ethos* and ideology of modernist detective stories is already a product of the nineteenth century. In this respect, Holquist's idea that at the beginning of the twentieth century detective fiction acted as an escape from the uncertainties and difficulties modernist fiction presented seems more reasonable, since it conforms to the fact that the modernist detective fiction still carried the Victorian belief in empiricism.[609]

Second, McHale's outlining suggests that modernist fiction and detective fiction are dominated by the same kind of epistemological poetics and thematics. In other words, McHale claims that the modernist detective story can be seen as modernist fiction's noncanonised or "low art" double, its "sister-genre."[610] It should be noted, though, that they might both present epistemological questions, as McHale suggests, but they do not answer them similarly. As Holquist asserts, modernist fiction questioned the certainties of the nineteenth century, and

[608] McHale 1989, 9.

[609] Holquist 1971, 146-147.

[610] McHale 1989, 59.

modernist detective story, still giving simple truths in simple form (modernist *kitsch*), acted as an escape from that literature.[611] In other words, and this is a simplifying but illustrative generalisation, modernist fiction is relativist in relation to epistemological questions, and both classical and modernist detective stories are not. Consequently, it is a questionable practice to categorise texts only according to issues they raise and to forget the answers they give or the philosophy and ideology they carry.

Third, McHale speaks solely about classical detective stories and does not address metaphysical detective fiction, as Jeanne C. Ewert has recently pointed out. Ewert argues convincingly that "when detective fiction of the postmodernist period makes the transition to an ontological dominant, it exceeds the simple category of the epistemological that McHale ascribes to it."[612] She gives several examples of this subgeneric tradition, like the works of Jorge Luis Borges, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Flann O'Brien and Georges Perec, and thus points out the narrowness of McHale's picture of a generic tradition that, actually, seems to cross the borders of historical and artistic periods. In sum, McHale's definition of detective fiction as the "little sister" genre of modernism seems to lead to irresolvable category errors.

McHale has dealt with the periodisation of the detective story later in his article on Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. He tries to solve the problem by suggesting that even if Eco's novel uses the detective story's epistemological structure, it also radically breaks with the conventions of the genre. He adapts William Spanos's definition of the *anti-detective story* when he states that *The Name of the Rose* evokes the impulse to detect only in order to frustrate it. According to McHale, the postmodernist anti-detective story inverts, suppresses or occludes essential features of the detective story pattern, and ultimately undermines its rationality. Consequently, *The Name of the Rose* ultimately purges the detective story of its "epistemological thematics" by deliberately exhausting

[611] Holquist 1971, 146.

[612] Ewert 1999, 180.

the detective story's epistemological structure.[613] Nevertheless, this analysis of Eco's novel does not add anything new to the earlier definitions of the postmodernist metaphysical detective story or anti-detective story, even if it is a clever analysis of a particular contemporary novel.

It is surprising that McHale finds it a problem that postmodernist authors have such a strong interest in the inventive use of the detective story and crime fiction. Of course the fact that he condemns the detective story as epistemological, modernist, and therefore an dated genre, generates a problem. This notion is clearly in conflict with Michael Holquist's view about the importance of detective story in postmodernist fiction. Even if Holquist's conception is an old one and needs modification, it is convincing in all its simplicity, in acknowledging the genealogy of the detective fiction, and in avoiding of the periodisation of genres.

Interestingly, McHale's analysis of Eco's novel seems to corroborate the ideas Holquist put forward two decades earlier. Of course, Holquist could not foresee the development of postmodernist literature and its numerous variations on the detective fiction pattern. One of the weaknesses, consequently, is that his definition of postmodernism is too narrow and still dominated by the relics of modernism. Naturally, it excludes the use made of myth and psychology in postmodernist fiction. In doing this, it generalises too much on the basis of an analysis of Alain Robbe-Grillet's novels (*nouveau roman*), and the idea that literature is about things and not people. Holquist does not take into account that this provocatively antipsychological and -mythical trend was present already in modernist aesthetics: Ortega y Gasset's work *La deshumanizatión del arte*, for example, was published as early as 1925. Holquist could not predict the ways postmodernist literature has used myth (in the works of Angela Carter, J. M. Coetzee, Maureen Duffy, Charles Palliser, Jeanette Winterson, or Fowles)[614] and psychology (the Jungian influence on the works of Fowles), and how, for instance, Fowles's fiction thematices questions of freedom and individuality.

[613] McHale 1992, 150-151.

[614] See Onega 1997, 187 and passim.

Nevertheless, Holquist's early emphasis on the importance of detective fiction for postmodernist fiction has been proved correct. His description of the manner postmodernist detective fiction foregrounds metaphysical problems and "the questions of life" is still of great value for contemporary theoretical and practical work on postmodernist literature.

Finally, I shall suggest a model in response to the question about the historical nature of detective fiction. McHale's theory seems to lead to a certain amount of frustration here. Deviating from McHale's reductive theory, Heta Pyrhönen correctly argues that "the question about the association of the genre [detective story] with the literature of modernism–or postmodernism–will remain unresolvable."[615] Indeed, the question is already wrong in orientation if it concerns what *one particular* literary period the genre belongs to, is associated with or epitomises, because it can be attributed to different periods following a certain process of modification of the genre's form or content. A genre like detective fiction inherently expresses certain historical values and a certain view of the world, and when the historical and ideological context changes, the genre becomes the object of mutation or parody, if indeed it survives these changes.[616] The evolution of genre is thus a result of a strained dialogue between different cultural convictions and historical world-views.

Since a new text might carry old ways of seeing the world, as Bakhtin suggests,[617] it can be claimed that contemporary detective stories of a more classical bent are still founded on the nineteenth-century positivistic and empiricist approach to the world. Indeed, William Spanos claims that the way the classical or modernist detective story solves the crime "by induction and calculative interpretative process" is just how modern Western people see the world is structured. The belief in the possibility of solving the crime and filling in all the gaps of a story reflects the belief in the capability of scientists, psychoanalysts, and social scientists to explain all immediate questions and, in

[615] Pyrhönen 1994, 45.

[616] For further discussion on the matter, see Brax 2000, and above Ch. 2.1.2.

[617] See above Ch. 2.1.2.

general, the "'form' of the well-made positivistic universe."[618] Postmodernist metaphysical detective stories challenge these ideas, which are viewed as the ideological relics of the past. Spanos argues that "the postmodern writer understands the linear/teleological structure of traditional literature to constitute a self-deceptive effort."[619]

According to Spanos, at the heart of the classical detective story is the totalitarian effort to negate mystery. Spanos argues that the reader's programmatic expectations of an absolute solution to a crime, which the "anticipatory technique" of a detective story spawns in the reader, requires a totalitarian social and political organisation. This organisation is made possible by the denial and elimination of mystery, uncanniness and difference, and by the founding of "a total, that is, preordained or teleologically determined and de-differentiated hegemonic structure–a 'final solution' […]."[620]

It is just this elimination of mystery that postmodernist literature and detective fiction goes against. Spanos argues:

> [T]he postmodern literary imagination at large insists on the disorienting *mystery*, the ominous and threatening uncanniness of being that resists naming, and that the paradigmatic literary archetype it has discovered is the anti-detective story (and its antipsychoanalytical analogue), the formal purpose of which is to evoke the impulse to "detect" or to psychoanalyze–to track down the secret cause–in order to violently frustrate this impulse by refusing to solve the crime (or find the cause of the neurosis).[621]

The postmodernist genre parody of detective fiction conventions thus functions as a rhetorical and ideological device.[622] Its *intentio operis* is to reveal the totalitarian and deterministic ideologies that classical detective fiction represent.

[618] Spanos 1987, 18.

[619] Ibid., 22.

[620] Ibid., 24.

[621] Ibid., 24-25.

[622] On the contextual approach to genre as ideological device, see Ch. 2.1.2.

As we shall see in the next subchapter in more detail, this intention also dominates the parodic application of the pattern of detective fiction in *A Maggot*. It should be remembered too that the detection pattern of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is similarly violated. As we saw earlier, all the efforts to track down the mystery of Sarah Woodruff by Victorian psychology or Romantic imagination, embodies frustrating efforts to "find the cause of neurosis," to name and possess that which "resists naming," the unspeakable, or the threatening.[623]

On the other hand, as we shall see in Chapter 7.3, Victorian and other classical detective stories already contained veiled suggestions about the indeterminacy of the world, suggestions which the postmodernist detective story openly carries to more radical conclusions.

7.2 Parody and Transgression

As we have seen, *A Maggot* bears a parodic relationship to the classical detective story. In the novel, the parodic breaking of the conventions of the classical detective story is a crucial part of its construing of the Romantic-existentialist theme of indeterminacy. The open end of the novel, the anti-teleology of the plot, and the lack of a clear-cut solution are marked parodic deviations from the classical conventions of detective stories. The novel leaves the end of the story open: even if the disappearance of Mr Bartholomew is rigorously inspected, no definitive answer can be found. *A Maggot* does not dramatise its most important scene in this respect, the cave scene, objectively and in a way that would dispel all doubt from the reader's mind.[624]

Frederick M. Holmes describes this break with the conventions of detective stories by employing the famous distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzet*. He relies mainly on Seymour Chatman's and Todorov's detailed explanations of the content

[623] See above especially Ch. 5.2.

[624] Cf. Holmes 1991, 231-232.

of these concepts, which were originally introduced by the Russian formalists. By definition, the plot (*sjuzet*) is the story in the form as it is actually told and the story (*fabula*) is the sum total of the narrated events.[625] Since Fowles's novel does not offer an unambiguous explanation for the cave scene, it prevents the reader from constructing the story from the plot.[626]

This formal description of the narrative structure of the novel is salutary; it helps to explain why the novel facilitates different interpretations of the reality behind the plot. When a definite and plausible explanation of reality is missing, every given account of the events seems equally viable. Instead of one all-inclusive story, the plot provides the means for the construction of various competing, conflicting and incomplete fabulas.

Moreover, in his analysis of the unconventional aspects of *A Maggot*'s detective pattern, Holmes refers to Todorov's idea that a classical detective story creates a strong illusion of a *fabula* independent of *sjuzet*.[627] In other words, the classical detective story aims at creating a belief that the detective can construct a definitive and unambiguous realist description of the course of events. Holmes takes up Todorov's notion that in the classical detective story the investigator is only an agent for composing the *fabula*, a plain mediator between the reader and the story. Holmes remarks that *A Maggot* breaks with these hierarchies since the reader simply cannot reconstruct the *fabula* of the novel.

A more specific way in which *A Maggot* breaks with the conventional detective story is the fact that the use of supernatural phenomena receives no rational explanation. The classical detective story favoured rational logic in their investigations of crimes and in the explanations of the fictional world at large, and implicitly lent support to the scientific method and empiricist ideology. The vow a member of the society for British detective authors, *The Detection Club*, has had to give, makes explicit (playfully, with a serious undertone) the rationality and the logic of probability manifested in classical detective stories:

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[625] Chatman 1980, 19-20.

[626] Holmes 1991, 232.

[627] Ibid.

> Do you solemnly swear never to conceal a vital clue from the Reader? – Do you promise to observe a seemly moderation in the use of Gangs, Conspiracies, Death Rays, Ghosts, Hypnotism, Trapdoors, Chinamen, ...and utterly and forever to forswear Mysterious Poisons Unknown to Science?[628]

And in 1928 Van Dine wrote twenty rules for every self-respecting author of detective fiction. Todorov provides an eight-point summary of these frequently reproduced and contested rules, one of which is that "[e]verything must be explained rationally; the fantastic is not admitted."[629]

This does not mean that the fantastic effect is totally ignored in classical detective stories. For instance, the gothic novel has influenced detective fiction in many ways, even though detective stories have made strong anti-gothic statements from Poe onwards and even though the *rule writers* of the 1920s and 1930s condemned gothic elements, such as supernatural occurrences, love and sentimentality, a spooky atmosphere and macabre detail.[630]

Nevertheless, this influence has not threatened the essentials of detective fiction. Panek explains that when the detective story enters mystery literature it does so only to "broaden the appeal of their fiction to bring in readers addicted to the pure gothic or the love romance."[631] Moreover, the function of supernatural elements in classical detective fiction is momentarily to challenge the principles of rationality. In Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-02) a supernatural dog threatens not only the peace of the rural community, but also the very faith in rationalism and in the scientific method. The reader is made to hesitate with Dr Watson in front of the supernatural until Holmes finally appears and masterfully solves the case in rational terms. The story aims at showing the

[628] Quoted in Holquist 1971, 142.

[629] Todorov 1977, 49.

[630] Panek 1987, 6

[631] Ibid.

foolishness of all superstition and the absurdity of doubting the power of scientific methods.

It is now easy to see that *A Maggot* essentially breaks with these conventional uses of the supernatural in detective fiction. As noted earlier, supernatural interpretations of the mysterious incidents remain plausible descriptions of what really happened in the novel.[632] This use of interminable fantastic effect clearly conflicts with the conclusive structure of the classical detective story, and, therefore, with its intrinsic nature. In other words, *A Maggot* commits a breach against the law of naturalising the fantastic in classical detective stories. This breach results in ironically empowering the enlightened "detective," Mr Ayscough, as a hero and, consequently, in encouraging the reader to reappraise the values of the Enlightenment and the omnipotence of empirical scientific method. In other words, the gothic elements of the novel, especially the supernatural phenomena, function not only as exotic devices to attract a broader readership, but also as organic parts of the open fantastic structure that questions the ideological basis of the classical detective story.

Another feature separating *A Maggot* from the classical detective story is the fact that the reader is kept unaware of the nature of the crime, or whether any criminal activity took place at all, and who is the real victim, if anyone, and why. Mr Ayscough is hired to find Mr Bartholomew, and that some kind of crime is connected to the case is only suspected and is never proved. Yet it is the very possibility that the crime or mystery will finally be revealed and defined that motivates the actions of the characters, and especially the rational questioner, Mr Ayscough. A storyline that radically questions the very existence of the crime is unknown to classical detective fiction. When trying to categorise the text, the concept of the *crime novel* as introduced by Julian Symons is not of any help either, since a crime novel without a crime is a contradiction in terms.[633]

[632] See Ch. 6.

[633] Cf. Symons 1985.

Consequently, this unfamiliarity and the unconventionality of the detective pattern of Fowles's novel produces a sense of mystery in the reader.

According to Michael Holquist, the strangeness that results from "jumbling the well-known patterns of classical detective stories" defines metaphysical detective stories.[634] In other words, instead of producing a "narcotizing effect," characteristic of their progenitors, these texts generate strangeness.[635] In many respects, *A Maggot* agrees with this description. Moreover, *A Maggot* can be seen as a palimpsest, "a new text that is built on the old detective story whose traditional elements are still noticeable behind the new text."[636] The new text ultimately destroys the traces of the old one, and this is the way *A Maggot* works: it ultimately rejects the classical crime plot, leaving it behind in order to direct interest towards different questions.

A Maggot essentially aims at solving the questions of life, and not those of death, as a metafictional detective story does by definition.[637] In classical and modernist detective stories, the rational operation of solving a murder-case, the death, is an end in itself, and as I would like to put it, a symbolical act carried out in order to strengthen the belief in a "well made" world. As the term *metaphysical* already suggests, *A Maggot* shifts the emphasis from simple corroboration of the ideological beliefs and certainties of the nineteenth century and its positivistic sciences to more pressing philosophical questions dealing with the nature of existence, truth and knowledge. Questions of freedom, femininity, power and the thematic opposition between the values of the Enlightenment and Romanticism dealt with in the novel can all be seen as examples of metaphysical issues, questions of life.

This questioning of positivistic science and Western logocentrism by means of the nonteleological narrative pattern of *A Maggot* has interesting connections to existentialist thought. William Spanos has claimed that Heidegger, following

[634] Holquist 1971, 155.

[635] Ibid.

[636] Ibid.

[637] Cf. ibid., 173.

Kierkegaard, speaks in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) of the dread (*Angst*) of the uncanny (*unheimlich*) that the positivistic sciences as well as the classical detective novel pattern try to domesticate.[638] Mr Bartholomew seems to speak on behalf of existentialism when he tells (albeit speaking in obscure parables) Rebecca that the stars mock human beings because they imprison themselves and do not understand that they are free to choose their own morals.[639] The novel could be interpreted as a portrayal of the way rationalism and Christianity, or their eighteenth-century combination, try to impose "a distancing and tranquilising ending or telos" to compensate for this threatening disappearance of God from the world, the Nietzschean death of God, and to prevent the *Logos* from becoming *logoi*.[640]

7.2.1 Developing Some Latent Suggestions of the Classical Detective Story

Let us now examine *A Maggot*'s dialogue with the detective fiction tradition in more detail. According to the present argument, *A Maggot* uses critically but also creatively the structure of the detective story subgenre that Wilkie Collins initiated with his novel *The Moonstone*. *A Maggot* renews this narrative tradition by cleverly solving the problems intrinsic in it, and at the same time maintains a critical distance from it. In other words, the novel is an example of the genre parody that is both homage to and mockery of the tradition.[641] Moreover, the parody is not only aimed at mocking the traditional generic form; it is also used as a rhetorical device to emphasise and explore certain philosophical suggestions

[638] Cf. Spanos 1987, 16.

[639] *M*, 56-57.

[640] Cf. Spanos 1987, 15 and 22.

[641] See Hutcheon 1985, 33, 91. It is noteworthy that Hutcheon has chosen to illustrate her idea by picking up a line (a *mise en abyme* sentence) from John Fowles's short story 'The Ebony Tower.'

of Collins's novel, one of which is latent and contradicts the prevalent Victorian ideology.

Let us start with the poetic problems of the Collinsian detective story and the solutions *A Maggot* finds to them. Characteristic of these texts is that many different narrators tell the story, each bringing the case a step closer to a solution. John G. Cawelti has argued that two problems make the realisation of this narrative structure troublesome. First, it is difficult to construct a convincing variety of points of view and coordinate their account of the action. Second, the description of the investigation and the role of the detective easily become dispersed. These intrinsic problems seem to explain why there are only a few successful examples of this type of text besides *The Moonstone*. Cawelti names two of them: John Dickson Carr's *The Arabian Night's Mystery* and Hammond Innes's *Lament for a Maker*.[642]

A Maggot also creatively solves the problems mentioned. First, it does not aim at a final coherence of different points of view. In other words, it consciously constructs an endless discord between the stories of the different narrators. Second, a larger part of the novel is built on a dialogue between Mr Ayscough and the witnesses. This narrative innovation, the replacing of the witnesses' monologues with dialogue between the witnesses and the investigator, ensures that the presence of Mr Ayscough is strongly felt throughout the novel. The reader follows the development of the investigation through the accounts of the examination and Mr Ayscough's letters to his master and other persons. Hence, there is little danger that the role of the investigator would remain marginal. On the contrary, the voice and values of the investigator are continuously present.

As the Collinsian detective story shares the convention of a rational closing of the story with the other classical detective stories, it might at first seem as if there is nothing to add to what I have previously said about *A Maggot*'s breach of this narrative principle. Nevertheless, there is an ideological rupture in the world-

[642] Cawelti 1976, 84.

view of the *Moonstone* that is vital for a description of the nature of the genre parody in Fowles's novel. Albert D. Hutter describes the split as follows:

> The novel does end with a solution; but the reader's experience throughout *The Moonstone* is weighted the other way: it engourages us to distrust closure. This particular mystery may be solved, but the mystery of the characters and the shadowy space between their actions, their observations, and their intentions are meant to puzzle. The novelist himself has come to distrust his own fictional world.[643]

On closer inspection, then, *The Moonstone* encourages a distrust of closure as, despite the rational solution, it leaves minor but, nevertheless, vital things unexplained. The characters retain at least some of the mystery and ambiguity that the narrative arrangement imposes on them. Therefore, *A Maggot* can be seen not as completely breaking with the genre's tradition but as emphasising the inexplicable quality in human nature that the Victorian positivistic ideology, manifested in the rational structure of Collins's novel, could not entirely hide.

In more general terms, it can even be argued that realism and rationality display their limitations in classical detective stories. Catherine Belsey maintains that even Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories paradoxically reveal the shortcomings of positivism. She asserts that

> the presentation of so many women in the Sherlock Holmes stories as shadowy, mysterious and magical figures precisely contradicts the project of explicitness, transgresses the values of the texts, and in so doing throws into relief the poverty of the contemporary concept of science. These stories, pleas for a total explicitness about the world, are unable to explain an area which nonetheless they cannot ignore.[644]

[643] Hutter 1983, 238.

[644] Belsey 1990, 283.

According to Belsey, scientificity works in Sherlock Holmes stories within the constraints of ideology, and is therefore unable to challenge it.[645] The stories "offer evidence of the tendency of positivism to push to the margins of experience whatever it cannot explain or understand."[646] Consequently, Sherlock Holmes stories conform to the notion that nineteenth-century realism was unable to represent women's psychology and sexuality except in a metaphorical or symbolic way or that it avoided signifying these things by extracting the woman's own voice.[647] So both *The Moonstone* and the Sherlock Holmes stories manifest an inner tension between overt Victorian values and ideology and the matters that positivism is unable to define or comprehend.

In sum, the parodic structure of *A Maggot* is a device for commenting on the questions of scientificity and ideology. The genre parody of Fowles's novel can be seen as a vehicle for bringing to the foreground indeterminacies–in fact annoying indeterminacies for the poetics of realism and the ideology of positivism–that classical detective stories, whether Collinsian or other, somewhat unsuccessfully tried to hide. In the following two subchapters, I shall discuss the way *A Maggot* deals with the question of scientificity.

7.3 The Limits of Enlightenment

> As a result of this painful enlightenment, Ourika learns not only to "analyz[e] and criticiz[e] almost all that had previously satisfied [her]" […] but also to call into question the so-called "natural order of things" […] and the universality of the supreme Enlightenment value: reason.

[645] Ibid., 285.

[646] Ibid., 285.

[647] Cf. ibid., 282-283 and passim.

> "But who can say what is or isn't rational?" she asks. "Is reason the same for everyone?" […].[648]

By definition, the term *metaphysical* in the name of the subgenre not only relates to the aesthetic and parodic features of the stories but also indicates that the metaphysical detective stories play and conduct experiments with philosophical and metaphysical ideas, and by doing so, take part in the contemporary philosophical and cultural discussion.[649] Accordingly, the purpose of the following analysis is to show how the particularity of a text is brought up when it is read against its own cultural context and within the relevant contemporary codes of interpretation.

In other words, I shall read *A Maggot* in the context of a quite recent but already classic philosophical debate about the legacy of the Enlightenment and, in the next chapter, the question of the self and freedom. Thus, the primary focus here will be Jürgen Habermas's 'Modernity–an Incomplete Project' (1981) and Jean-François Lyotard's 'Answering the Question: What is Potmodernism' (1982), two influential and controversial articles from the early 1980s. These texts have proved a major focus in debates on postmodernism. They were presented only a few years before the publication of *A Maggot*. So, Fowles's novel could perhaps be read as a novelistic comment on a discussion of current interest.

Even if the debate is well known, let me start by briefly introducing its content. According to Habermas, modern society started to take shape when there was a new turn in historical development in the eighteenth century. Science, morality and art originated as autonomous institutions and questions of knowledge and the

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[648] Waller 1994, xvi.

[649] On the definition of metaphysical detective fiction, see above the beginning of Ch. 7. Anna Botta's study of Antonio Tabucchi's *Il Filo dell'orizzonte* (1986) and of Patrick Modiano's *Rue des Boutiques Obscures* (1978) offers a good example of this. Botta argues that both of these existential and metaphysical detective stories are "permeated by the tension between a traditional hermeneutics of time and a more modern hermeneutics of spatial detection" (1999, 218, passim). She applies Foucault's and Heidegger's notions of time and space to her interpretation of these two novels.

"unified world-views of religion and metaphysics fell apart." This effected a cultural rationalisation whose aim in turn was to organise and enrich everyday social life.[650]

Habermas states that the belief in progress, the project of modernity that has survived from the Enlightenment until today, should also be kept alive in the future. He accuses antimodernists or neo-conservatives, i.e. the theorists of post-structuralism and postmodernism, of giving up the Enlightenment's project of truth, normative correctness, authenticity and beauty. Even if he shares the critique of subject-centred philosophy with post-structuralism, he believes that intersubjective communicative reason can still hold up the commitment to truth, right and sincerity.[651] The debate between Habermas and post-structuralism or postmodernism is also a debate about Marxism as viable social and political philosophy:

> In this debate Habermas's evolutionary version of historical materialism is opposed by both the revolutionary class politics of classical Marxism and the postmodernist 'incredulity' towards all such 'metanarratives' of human history.[652]

Lyotard responds to Habermas's accusations by claiming that the Enlightenment narrative of infinite progress, "of […] the unitary end of history and of a subject," is an authoritarian and totalitarian doctrine.[653] As Lyotard shows in more detail in *The Postmodern Condition*, the Enlightenment, as well as the other Western metanarratives or *grands récits*, such as Marxism, Christianity and the myth of the development of sciences, aim at giving a comprehensive explanation of the worldly phenomena and try to show that the goal of history is to dissolve all differences, opposition and multiplicity. He maintains that these metanarratives

[650] Ibid. On this point Habermas relies on Max Weber's idea of the modernisation process.

[651] Brooker 1992, 125.

[652] Ibid., 126.

[653] Lyotard 1984, 73.

have no legitimation in the present cultural situation. For Lyotard, postmodernism is a condition that does not allow any belief in teleological narratives of historical progress. Lyotard discards the central principles of the Enlightenment by his claim that the best sources of the legitimation of knowledge we now have are the modest *petits récits*, small narratives that are temporary, relative, and discontinuous. Yet the Lyotardian position is not nihilistic. Instead, his ethical agenda is to argue against "the telos of consensus that Habermas evokes" because he sees it as a form of domination and stabilisation and as a project for erasing all cultural differences.[654]

Let us now turn to *A Maggot*'s illustration of the principles of the Enlightenment. We can start the analysis by assessing the relationship between Rebecca Lee and Henry Ayscough. Their symbolical confrontation has its counterparts in many of Fowles's other novels: it resembles the encounters between Sarah and Charles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Diana and David in 'The Ebony Tower,' Mirabel and Ferdinand in *The Collector*, Erato and Miles in *Mantissa*, June and Nicholas in *The Magus*, and especially Michael Jennings and Isobel Dodgson in another metaphysical detective story, 'The Enigma.' Common to all of them is that the encounter between a man and a woman turns into an existential experience for the male protagonist, to a demanding moment when he is forced to meditate amply on his life and possibly to make a difficult

[654] Poster 1992, 572. It should be noted, however, that Lyotard and the other postmodern philosophers have been accused of promoting the same kind of totalitarian attitude they oppose while dealing with the legacy of the Enlightenment. It has been shown that the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment were not as unanimous on the question about the local, particular and different as the postmodern philosophers seem to imply. For instance, Malick W. Ghachem shows that Montesquieu had an understanding for the local laws and customs of the Caribbean people (2001, passim). It has been suggested, moreover, that "the dilemmas experienced in the Enlightenment were as profound as those experienced by Foucault, Lyotard, and de Man" (Gordon 2001, 5). Be that as it may, this study should show that rather than being simply subversive, Fowles's attitude towards the legacy of the Enlightenment is ambivalent and that his criticism is especially directed at the shortcomings, limitations and one-sidedness of Western rationalism and scientificity.

moral decision. The values and traits of the characters represented in these confrontations become emphasised, not least because, in resolving the underlying mystery, their critical examination compensates for the absence of a simple, self-explanatory and closed storyline.

In *A Maggot*, Mr Ayscough has been seen as the representative of eighteenth-century reason and Rebecca Lee of Romantic feeling, opposition, imagination and individualism. Holmes argues as follows:

> Ayscough is rational, empirical, legalistic, authoritarian, conservative, and misogynistic, whereas Lee is intuitive, imaginative, artistic, visionary, democratic, feminist, and revolutionary. Ayscough is obviously meant to be seen as a representative early-eighteenth-century man of reason and neo-classical tradition, whereas Lee, as the novel's epilogue makes clear, anticipates romantic individualism and reliance on feeling and intuition.[655]

I agree with this binary formulation in its main points, but not in every respect; Ayscough's conservatism seems to be only relative. I believe that the reader should here activate his encyclopaedic knowledge of cultural history in order to reach a more sensible understanding of Mr Ayscough's character and historical position. The question also concerns the postmodernist sensibility of reading. The reading of Mr Ayscough's personality should also be grounded on the postmodern idea that morality is aporetic, that moral acts are not completely and unambiguously good or bad.[656] As was previously noted, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* suggests that its characters display mixed dispositions, even if this understanding of human personality disagrees with Victorian psychology or social theories.[657] In other words, we should not be like Victorian psychologists or social theorists as readers of fiction and, in this context, in our estimations of Fowles's characters.

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[655] Holmes 1991, 230.

[656] Bauman 1993, 11.

[657] See Ch. 3.2.1.

Mr Ayscough is certainly conservative since, in the dialogue, he shows the intention of not allowing Rebecca Lee to step out of the role she is forced into by contemporary English society and its notions of class, station and gender. There is no sign that he would endorse the more radical social theories of the Enlightenment (Rousseau, Mably) that see power as originating from the people. Ayscough is in this respect still an advocate of a static, determining, and undemocratic social hierarchy reminiscent of an absolutist feudal order. However, he is also a man of advanced ideas, the representative of the new enlightened reason in England. Ayscough is a practical spokesman for the new rationalistic and empiricist thought and for the opposition to all superstition (even if he still reveals himself to be susceptible to Lore),[658] i.e. for the highly-evolved ideas that led to modern legal practice, science, and the abolition of the persecution of witches. Moreover, the procedure of hearing the witnesses and giving the right to be heard to the accused are also democratic, enlightened acts.[659]

However, despite the moral ambiguity, the open end of the novel, the failure to solve the case, ironically questions Ayscough's rationalist and empiricist values. His character symbolises the limits of rationality and the negative side of the Enlightenment. Yet showing the limits of enlightened reason does not mean denying its attainments altogether. Rather, the novel could be seen to express the Romantic idea, manifest, for example, in Shelley's and Blake's poetry, that reason is an obstacle for the imagination.[660] In other words, the novel does not deny the value of reason but shows that reason can act as a restraint on contemplative experience. This is clearly illustrated by the spiritual superiority of Rebecca Lee– the messenger of early Romantic thought in the novel–over Henry Ayscough. Consequently, the novel voices the Romantic Movement's criticism of the lifelessness of Enlightenment.

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[658] See *M*, 232.

[659] This is of course the ancient Greek legal principle: *audiatur et altera pars*.

[660] Cf. Reed 1975, 19.

Another critical argument against the project of the Enlightenment is, as we have seen, that it cannot deal with cultural and human differences and does not see the relative nature of happiness. Lyotard's notion of the Enlightenment as a metanarrative continues this, by now classical criticism from a postmodern vantage point. It ties in with the recent efforts of feminist, antiracist and anti-colonial discourses to question the principles of universal knowledge and of the "universalisation of the rational subject" that Enlightenment propagated and that works against minorities:

> They [feminists, theoreticians of postcolonialism etc.] have shown how this universalization has worked against minority cultures, how it has served the interests of the established subject positions, how it makes Other all groups, races, and sexes that do not conform to its image of autonomous individuality.[661]

In this respect, Rebecca Lee is the representative of cumbersome otherness that questions the presumption of the Enlightenment, represented by Henry Ayscough, that every aspect of reality should adjust to the same static, simple and reasonable model. As the Shakers movement and their new language are opposed to the general cultural tendencies and institutions of power of eighteenth-century England, and of the Western manner of life in general, their story can be seen as a small narrative, even if the Shakers is a relatively minor Christian sect. Symbolically, the novel emphasises the denial of any totality rather than endorses the Shakerian values as an alternative. The novel implies that, at its best, knowledge is provincial, temporary and oppositional, or a "quintessential form of imaginative invention,"[662] and satisfies the needs, aesthetic and moral endeavours, and love of freedom of a particular group of people.

In conclusion, *A Maggot* represents the problems of the Enlightenment as a comprehensive metanarrative. Yet the representation of the historical situation is

[661] Poster 1992, 570.

[662] Lyotard 1984, 60.

not a picture of the Lyotardian postmodern condition imposed on history, as the story does not suggest that the eighteenth-century society is constituted of a manifold of small narratives. If it did imply that, the picture would have no historical accuracy, since Christianity and the Enlightenment, of course, were the two great metanarratives of the eighteenth century. It does not present a Marxist view of history either, since the depiction of the symbolic battle between Henry Ayscough, the representative of the ruling power, and the dissident Rebecca Lee does not support the idea of historical teleology. However, it seems to agree with Lyotard's project dealing "in the validation of oppositional tales, the little stories or histories told by 'others.'"[663] Moreover, as the following subchapter makes an effort to show, the novel is an attempt to find an answer to the question of self and freedom.

7.4 Escaping Discourse

> Undoubtedly, texts (as well as literary genres) can be characterized according to their privileged level of openness.[664]

As we saw earlier, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* deals with the question of self and freedom in a particular way. The novel conforms at least partially to the antihumanist idea common to postmodern philosophical (Foucault, Derrida), sociological (Bourdieu, Althusser) and psychological (Lacan) theories claiming that the self is born when an individual takes part in activities, discourses and institutions that give meaning to reality. However, the novel also suggests that in static and hierarchical societies with tight moral codes there exist at best opposing subcultures, like the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in Victorian times,

[663] Klein 1995, 280.

[664] Eco 1981, 39.

and discursive practices that support relative freedom in constituting one's own ego.[665] Correspondingly, in this chapter I shall discuss the picture that *A Maggot* gives of a person who combats society's determining, "writing," or the "putting into discourse" (Foucault) of their selves.

The confrontation between Rebecca Lee and Henry Ayscough is a symbolic battle between two different kinds of discourses. This interpretation is corroborated by Rebecca's answer to Henry Ayscough: "'Twill not fit thy alphabet, so be it. Yet so was it not to me."[666] It is partly accidental that these discourses represent enlightened reason and Romantic religiousness, as the confrontation gains general meaning. Besides the historical ideological suggestions, the description of the battle aims to reveal the general possibility of escaping the most powerful discourse(s) of one's own time. The birth of Ann Lee at the end of the story can be interpreted as a symbol of the rise of different values, discourse and knowledge of the world, a new *episteme*.

Yet this does not mean individuality in the Cartesian or humanist sense. It is rather a question of the sudden materialisation of the possibility of taking part in a different, at its best liberating and dignifying story or discursive practice; it is a matter of being capable of avoiding the totalitarian, unethical explanation of one's being and the rationalist will to power. Rebecca Lee is not an individual hero of the bourgeois novel, although in some sense she may represent the powers of historical forces, like characters in classical historical novel. Lukács refers to Goethe's characters Klärchen (*Egmont*, 1788) and Dorothea (*Hermann und Dorothea*, 1797), and especially to Scott's Jeanie Deans (*Heart of Midlothian*, 1818):

> The greatness of the crisis periods of humanity rests to a large extent on the fact that such hidden forces are always dormant in the people, and that they require only the occasion for them to appear on the surface.[667]

[665] See above Ch. 3.5.

[666] *M*, 383.

[667] Lukács 1989, 52.

Similarly, Rebecca can be seen as a representative of the eighteenth-century common woman whose self-confidence, spiritual power and eloquence some unforeseen incidents bring about. In this respect, Rebecca's character is an illustration of the human greatness liberated by a disturbance that Lukács speaks of. In this, she resembles Klärchen, Dorothea and, especially, Jeanie. Most importantly, however, Rebecca's character represents human efforts that seem doomed to remain marginal and transitory, even if they are to be desired.

The novel can be seen to represent the "prehistory of the present," the causal historical, social and human factors that have led to the present historical situation, and yet it does not imply any progress in human relations.[668] As the epilogue of the novel declares, the spiritual revolution started with Ann Lee and the grounding of the Shakers turned into a fixed dogma and practices after her death:

> Their efforts (especially John Wesley's) were, *as always*, one day to breed a narrow-minded bigotry, an inward tyranny as life-stultifying as the tyrannies they first tried to end, or fled from.[669]

The epilogue expresses the idea that every established religion is just another form of authoritarian and totalitarian metanarrative without ultimate moral justification. Accordingly, the passage above seems to suggest symbolically that every other revolution that establishes a metanarrative leads finally to the decline of the original idea. Thus, Rebecca's character is a symbol for the freedom that an individual might gain at a provisional moment in history, after the escape from a determining discursive practice, and just before the new one has lost its innovative power, i.e. at the moment of creation.

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[668] Cf. Lukács 1989, 53 and *M*, 459-460.

[669] *M*, 457, my italics.

But how is the idea of escaping the power of a totalitarian discursive practice connected to the manipulation of a detective story pattern? The answer is to be found in the fact that detective fiction is a popular genre with extremely precise narrative conventions. In Fowles's fiction, the rules and teleological nature of classical detective fiction represent the greatest totalitarian power possible imposed on the fictional world and its characters. The characters of detective fiction are living under a heavily determined order as the rational solution of the genre clarifies the fictional world in a way that, in principle, is aimed at giving a reason for every detail of the fictional world (even if it does not always succeed in this, as we have seen). In other words, the ego of a character is subjugated to the conventions and ideology of this institutionalised discourse. Thus, Rebecca's ability to escape the conventions of classical detective fiction symbolises the possibility of escaping the prevalent "technologies of the self" (Foucault) in eighteenth-century society, and more generally, discursive practices that do not serve humane ends.

Finally, it must be noted that Fowles's novel does not recommend any extreme idea of the self. As the novel's epilogue implies, Fowles appreciates the Shakers because of their modesty in daily life. I do not agree with Jeffrey Roessner who claims that Fowles does not adequately distinguish "the modern self capable of dissent" from the privatised self of the modern consumer society.[670] The Shaker's way of life cannot be seen as anticipating the consumption habits of modern Western societies in any sense. Fowles alludes to Western society's obsession with the self by referring to the Shakers' concept of "the Devil's great I." According to Fowles, contemporary society is threatened just because it encourages the combination of the idea of excess with personal success. Thus, the novel does not propose that the alternative to the tyranny of one discursive practice is the fanatic worshipping of the self or individuality, but instead,

[670] Roessner 2000.

encourages the cherishing of the "old sense of mediocrity: that of a wise and decent moderation."[671]

[671] *M*, 459-460.

CHAPTER 8: EPILOGUE

> Personality is a mystery.[672]
>
> The river of life, of mysterious laws and mysterious choice,
> flows past a deserted embankment […].[673]

In the above survey I have studied several genre patterns and narrative conventions in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*, and their role in reading and interpreting the novels. I have examined these features in relation to generic traditions and the poetics and ethics of postmodernism. The utilisation of different generic features and narrative conventions in the novels has been shown to serve a common thematics, the theme of indeterminacy. The study reveals that the sense of mystery, a flaunting of openness, and a striving for undetermined society and personal freedom dominate Fowles's historical fictions throughout. Through applying the poetics of mystery to the representation of history, Fowles's fictions defend the possibility for personal growth and historical change, and criticise social stasis, the erasing of different subject positions, and the Western

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[672] cummings 1953, 43.

[673] *FLW*, 398.

separation from nature that results from artificial, universalist and totalitarian scientific or social categorisation.[674]

The present study shows that indeterminacy, regarded earlier mainly as a feature of the novel's relativistic approach to history, proves to be far more embracing: it concerns the fictional world in several different ways. Indeterminacy is seen to penetrate profoundly the portrayed world as well as the portrayal of that world when the examination is extended to concern several different generic frames and narrative conventions. Moreover, the present analysis has revealed that the depiction of an indeterminate world and the indeterminacy of that depiction are also thematised in such a way that coincides with the postmodern ethical theory in its main points.

On the basis of the particular genre analyses of this study, I shall now sum up the ways in which and, indeed, to what extent, the different narrative and genre patterns of Fowles's historical fictions correspond with the poetics of mystery, the theme of indeterminacy, and postmodern ethical principles.

First, the anomalous representation of history challenges historiography as a science, even if it does not deny its worth. The anomalous representation, examined in detail in this study, include the questioning of historical memory, necessary and excessive anachronisms, hesitant character description, alternative storylines, and the play with the reality effect, like the filling of the dark areas of history with reasonably improbable occurrences. This kind of indeterminacy in historical representation seems to reveal at least two kinds of intention. On the one hand, it shows respect for the otherness of the past, as it reveals the

[674] Mahmoud Salami has also paid attention to this. However, the problem with his study is that even if he addresses radical openness in Fowles's fiction on their semantic level, following Derrida's philosophy of language (and several stock ideas of the theorists of postmodernist literature), he also paradoxically, defying classical logic, claims that Fowles's novels are also highly political, especially in expressing a socialist enthusiasm for dealing with the antagonism between lower and upper classes (see Salami 1992, 266). In other words, he both claims that there is always a radical deferral of meaning in language and that there is a precise meaning expressed in Fowles's works.

inadequacy of every frame of historical explanation. It also argues for a *non*teleology of historical development: the novels show that it is only our anachronistic gaze that makes the historical development appear to be predetermined. On the other hand, the novels also deconstruct earlier ideas about particular historical eras, the eighteenth and nineteenth century respectively, and create a fresh image of the past and its cultural milieus and occupations. This paradox seems to reveal that even if historiography is regarded as relative, we are always under the influence of historical representations; that history has an identity, but that this identity is constantly changing; that all writing of history, each "truth" of history, is at least partially historical, cultural and ideological. Moreover, the novels make the reader aware of the moral indefiniteness of historical phenomena. In particular, *A Maggot* suggests that the elements of freedom change into the elements of power in the course of history, as it makes a claim that the establishment of the Shaker movement marked a sign of freedom in its inaugural state, but that the teachings of the Shakers were later to become just another dogma.

However, the ethical idea about the openness, relativity and inadequacy of every historical explanation does not seem realised in every detail of the stories. The ethical turns into morality especially in the description of Mrs Poulteney's character. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, thus, fails to fulfil the postmodern ethical principle of character description on this particular point. However, this moral occupation, the building up of a caricature of a Victorian Evangelical woman, is partly compensated by the fact that Mrs Poulteney is a character who least of all people respects the ethical principle of freedom and indeterminacy that the novel as a whole stands for. The same argumentation also fits to a degree the description of Dr Grogan in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Mr Ayscough in *A Maggot*, as their efforts to explain the world in psychological or rationalist terms are ironically questioned.

Second, the romance pattern, with its quest motif and mixing of illusion with facts, is used to call into question the values and identity of the "knight-errands," Charles Smithson and Henry Ayscough. More specifically, the quest becomes an

existential experience for these characters; it is a process that is aimed to make these men aware of the relativity of their earlier values and of any universal notion of the world, whether rationalist, empiricist, or religious. It is another matter whether the quest finally leads to any fundamental personal change in these two men. However, the encounter between Rebecca Lee and Mr Ayscough is offered as a possibility for the latter to change, even if this does not take place at the end of his quest.[675] On the other hand, the romance form works in the novels, making the historically other strange and thus not easily forgotten.

Third, the essayistic passages of *A Maggot* speak about the hate of nature and about the effort to possess it through categorisation and utilisation. As we have seen, this is a variation of the kind of criticism of Western ontology that is put forward by Levinas and Lyotard among others.

Fourth, the breaking of the classical pattern of the detective story in *A Maggot* reveals ultimately the limitations and ideological orientations of positivistic approaches to reality that the classical detective novel pattern seems to sustain at least outwardly. The same result, and this is the fifth point, is effected with the breaking of the conventions of biological tragedy, as this breaking emphasises the problems and latent ideologies of Victorian scientific, psychological or social-Darwinist explanations.

Finally, the use of the fantastic structure in *A Maggot* is also a sign of this kind of ontological problematic. It reveals the multiplicity of discursive, historically and culturally divergent approaches to the world. And by creating polyphonic, perpetual tension between these qualitatively different explanations, it shakes the faith in any universal moral or scientific explanation of reality. Every generic frame, whether those of speech or literary genres, seem inadequate to reveal the truth behind the mystery that overflows them all. It creates an endless ambiguity towards the world of the narrative. Indeterminacy thus means the avoidance of

[675] A variation of this motive of change is offered in Fowles's 'The Enigma' in which the detective Michael Jenning seems finally to understand the meaning of the quest he has taken part in.

closure through open generic and narrative forms, that is, through the poetics of mystery.

All in all, the problematising of simple identities, the double movement of both creating and deconstructing them, makes the representation of history ethical in Fowles's novels. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* could be read as ethical narratives about the dangers of fixing identities, of believing in clear, unchanging and determined ontologies of nature, personality, or historical phenomena.

However, it must be emphasised that indeterminacy does not seem to suggest irrationalism in Fowles's fiction. The novels appear to defy the simple thematic dualism rather than form a binary opposition between rationality and irrationality. Instead of denying the worth of rational thinking, they aim to show the inadequacies of enlightened reason, empiricism and positivism, the limits of scientific categorisation and representation, and the historical interconnectedness of reason and ideology. Indeed, the novels suggest a reciprocity between reason and irrationality, a historically relative account of what is regarded as rational and acceptable. Sarah Woodruff's suggested "madness" and irrational behaviour appears to be ultimately the product of her literary education and innate sensibility. Most importantly, the novel reveals finally the irrational and unethical elements of the rational science of the Victorian age by nullifying Dr Grogan's diagnosis of Sarah as a madwoman (not in the attic but at the breakwater). I believe that *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, therefore, supports Foucault's idea about the nature of reason. Karlis Racevskis summarises Foucault's idea as follows:

> It is precisely when rational intelligibility imposes itself as all-encompassing and self-sufficient that power strategies operating outside the limits of immediate comprehension are given free rein.

In other words, an ethical point of view requires that we also acknowledge the random, indeterminate and arbitrary elements operating within the systematic discourses.[676]

Let us now offer some critical reflections on the concept of genre as a critical tool. In this study, genre and generic conventions have not been considered completely "silent" forms of transtextuality in Fowles's historical fictions, just means of classification, but rather as an active part of the reading and interpretation process. Accordingly, genre has been seen to work as an intermediary concept between Fowles's novels, literary tradition and contemporary fiction. The novels comment in various ways on the generic traditions and conventions they take part in and depart from, such as Victorian naturalistic tragedy or the classical detective story, and the culture and literature that produced those conventions. They re-conceptualise reality, take part in a world-making process, and affect our understanding of history through developing and parodying certain genres. As noted above, the novels construe the theme of indeterminacy by particular use of certain historical genres. All this seems to prove that genre is an intertextual concept and plays an active part in reading and interpretation.

On the other hand, my reading of the relationship between *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* seems to show that genre concepts may also have a more specific role within intertextual readings and interpretations. As a principle, when a text activates a hermeneutic relation with a subtext, it seems vital to consider the genre or mode that the subtext belongs to or the generic conventions it uses or modifies. Moreover, it also seems necessary to take into account the cultural context or *episteme* that informed the production of the subtext and the genre it represents. Hence, the knowledge of the Victorian cultural background and discursive practices that led Thomas Hardy to interconnect tragedy with biological determinism seems to make us more aware of the critical target of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: the criticism of Hardy's

[676] Racevskis 1993, 58-59

and, in more general terms, the late-Victorian deterministic world-view. In other words, Fowles's novels do not value-freely rewrite a particular Victorian text but also make an effort to construe a new world-view or ideology through genre parody. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, therefore, features a critical examination of the deterministic world-view of Victorian naturalistic tragedy. Consequently, my readings of the intertextuality of Fowles's fiction suggest that a new text also has an effect on the reading of its subtexts.[677] Besides Hardy's novels, Fowles's historical fictions also make us consider anew our responses to, for instance, the Gospels as a cultural text or the classical detective story as a genre.[678]

Finally, it should be noted that Fowles's fictions assess the Victorian heritage not only according to subject matter, as in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Ebony Tower*,[679] but also by genre patterns. Several of the parodied genres and subgenres in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* became institutionalised during the Victorian era: the classical detective story, the fantastic, sf (scientific romance) and biological tragedy.[680] In my study I hope to have demonstrated that Fowles's genre parodies both reveal the deterministic

[677] For a discussion of the retrospective influence that holds between a text and its subtexts and how this relates to post-structuralist literary theory and Taranovsky's method of analysis, see Tammi 1991, 72-74.

[678] The reader might begin to see the Gospels as romances, since *A Maggot* uses this generic pattern inventively in the representation of the birth of a special sect of religious dissenters in the eighteenth century. That is, the story of *A Maggot* retrospectively induces a reading in which the Gospels could be seen as quest stories featuring Jesus Christ, who undergoes several ordeals and who, finally, reaches a position in court and beside the king (in this case, in the *King*dom of Heaven) just as the successful knight errands in medieval vernacular romances did after their return from their miraculous and courageous adventures.

[679] For an account of the critical examination of Victorian values in *The Ebony Tower*, see Brax 1993, 139-141.

[680] It should be noted that sf did not appear as a moderately institutionalised genre prior to the Victorian period and that it took even longer before the genre and the term *science fiction* or *sf* became firmly established (cf. James 1994, 7-11).

ideologies of these genres and radically develop their suggestions of indeterminacy, mystery and otherness.

Appendix

John Fowles's literary work

(1) Fiction

1963 *The Collector*
1966 *The Magus*
1969 *The French Lieutenant's Woman*
1974 *The Ebony Tower*
1977a *The Magus: A Revised Version* (with Foreword)
1977b *Daniel Martin*
1982 *Mantissa*
1985 *A Maggot*

(2) Selected non-fiction
The list includes editions and translations but not introductions, afterwords or independent articles.

1964 *The Aristos: A Self-Portrait in Ideas*
1968 *The Aristos: A Self-Portrait in Ideas* (revised edition)
1973 *Poems*
1974a *Cinderella* (by Charles Perrault, 1697, adapted and translated by JF, illustrated by Sheilah Beckett)
1974b *Shipwreck* (with photographs by the Gibsons of Scilly)
1977 *Ourika* (by Claire de Duras, 1823, translated and with a Foreword by JF)
1978 *Islands* (with photographs by Fay Godwin)
1979 *The Tree* (with photographs by Frank Horvat)
1980a *The Aristos: A Self-Portrait in Ideas* (second revised edition)

1980b *The Enigma of Stonehenge* (with photographs by Barry Brukoff)

1980c *Monumenta Britannica, Parts One and Two* (by John Aubrey, edited by JF)

1982 *A Short History of Lyme Regis*

1983 *Lyme Regis, Three Town Walks*

1985 *Land*

1990 *Lyme Regis Camera*

1998 *Wormholes* (collected essays and writings)

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1994 *Barchester Towers*. With an introd. by Joanna Trollope. Ware: Wordsworth Classics. (1857)

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Abstract

The Poetics of Mystery. Genre, Representation, and Narrative Ethics in John Fowles's Historical Fiction.

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John Fowles's two postmodernist historical fictions, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and *A Maggot* (1985), apply several different generic conventions in the representation of history. This study focuses on their use of the conventions of the historical novel, romance, the fantastic, science fiction, the essay and the metaphysical detective story, as well as on the functions of the conventions in act of reading and interpretation. Through varied genre and other intertextual analyses, the study examines the use and abuse of generic and narrative traditions in Fowles's fictions. Moreover, the novels are compared to a number of other works of contemporary fiction, especially British historical fiction, and read alongside the theories on postmodernist narratives.

The poetics of mystery, i.e. the purposive construction of a sense of mystery or indeterminacy, is common to the use of the different genre patterns in Fowles's novels. In the novels, the pervasive theme of indeterminacy grows from an insecure depiction of the historical world, such as hesitant character description or multiple storylines. Moreover, the theme is related to the questions of historical development, historical views on nature, social and historical determinacy, principles of historiography, and ethical encounters between two individuals or historical eras. It highlights the tension between the Western scientific outlook and other ways of experiencing the world, ranging from artistic to non-conceptual and existentialist.

The different generic conventions, the representation of history and the theme of indeterminacy in Fowles's fictions are discussed in relation to postmodern ethics and current ethical theory on narratives. Fowles's genre parodies reveal the

hidden ideologies of old, particularly Victorian, genres and develop their latent suggestions of openness. In the novels, ambiguity, openness or resistance to closure is thematised in a manner that accords with the postmodern philosophy's and social theory's claim that the ethical resides in the indeterminable. The resourceful application of generic conventions is shown to be a vital part of the novels' ethical estimation of Victorian heritage and of Western rationalistic thought, particularly that of the Enlightenment.

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